

***Karaoke: Creating An Intimate Connection Between Artist And Audience
Through Popular Music, An Enquiry In Performance And Video.***

Sally Rees BFA (Hons)

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of Master of Fine Arts (Research)
University of Tasmania June 2005

Signed statement of originality

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by the University or any other institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, it incorporates no material previously published or written by another person except where due acknowledgement is made in the text.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Sally Rees', with a stylized, cursive script.

Sally Rees

Signed statement of authority of access to copying

This thesis may be made available for loan and limited copying in accordance with the Copyright Act 1968.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Sally Rees', with a large loop at the top and a horizontal stroke across the middle.

Sally Rees

Abstract

Employing the media of performance and video, this research project experimented with, and established methods of, creating an intimate connection between artist and audience within a public gallery space through harnessing the affective quality of music as defined by popular culture theorist, Lawrence Grossberg.

In his 1997 collection of essays, *Dancing in Spite of Myself*¹, Grossberg identifies the difference between the effective and affective qualities of music. He states that while the lyric and cultural references within a song may create a specific effect, a song's power over us is just as frequently affective; that is to say, largely devoid of logical analysis and indefinably attached instead to an individual's personal history.

Within this project, Grossberg's texts and the fiction and non-fiction writing of Nick Hornby have been significant. Another key reference point was women's performance video of the 1970's, in particular *I Say I Am*, an anthology of this genre curated by Maria Troy and supported by her text on the subject. This genre of work was influential for the simple technical qualities inherent to the technologies of the period. A number of artists informed the research process: Bas Jan Ader, Gillian Wearing and Erwin Wurm are of importance on the basis of their straightforward approach to producing work by 'acting out', and their exploitation of the freedom that recorded performance allows. Works by Thomas Struth, Tony Oursler and Yuan Goang-Ming informed the technical experimentation of the research, and an understanding of their processes is evident in the body of work that supports the resulting thesis exhibition of four

¹ Lawrence Grossberg, *Dancing in Spite of Myself: Essays on Popular Culture*, Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1997

single channel video works. The project adopts the term *Karaoke*² as its title to describe the performative process of ‘acting-out’ personal and cultural identities both within and via a musical space.

This research project investigates artist/audience intimacy by exploiting the inherent inclusiveness of popular music. I have sought to engage my audience through simple, real-time³ performance video and video manipulation techniques. In addition, I have examined popular culture by focusing on my own emotional investment in its material and aural artefacts, thus making a contribution to current pop cultural dialogue and, through exploration of its techniques, adding to the collective body of knowledge in the field of video installation⁴.

² *Karaoke*, an activity originating in Korea and Japan, is popular in pubs and nightclubs. It involves singing popular songs into a microphone to a recorded accompaniment while taking lyrical cues from subtitles on a video monitor.

³ *Real-time* is a term relating to the ability of certain computer systems to process and update data as soon as it is received from an external source. I use this term to describe the performances within this project that appear on video in an un-edited state. They are fully representative of the real-time event of performance.

⁴ I use the term *installation* in its original sense, to apply to the process of *installing* work within the gallery, not to describe the broad art practice of installation.

To the memory of my friend Wendy, who helped me to find my own soundtrack.

Acknowledgements

This research project owes a great debt to my family, friends and colleagues for their continued faith and support. I thank my supervisors Leigh Hobba and Maria Kunda, who were always accessible. Leigh Hobba provided valuable artistic criticism and technical support. Maria Kunda gave constructive advice and criticism on progressive drafts of the exegesis and proofed and edited the latter drafts. I am grateful to Celia Lendis for reading and generously commenting on a late draft of the exegesis, and for her astute suggestions for refining and clarifying the written expression.

My work colleagues at CAST, Fiona Lee, and Philip Watkins, read the exegesis and gave comments, and Michael Edwards in particular provided constructive criticism and improved the clarity of the argument. Toni-Lynn Frederick, Felix Ratcliff, Lucia Usmiani and John Vella gave frank, encouraging responses to the works-in-progress and the exegesis. Monica and Brian Coates, Caz Rodwell, Susie Findlay and Dale Lewis cheerfully and willingly permitted me to try out ideas, and capture them on video and gave much moral support.

For the final work, Neil Rowe acted as choirmaster, Stuart Brockmann was production assistant. J. Boag and Son sponsored the event. The Last Farewell choir volunteered their time one cold evening: Julian Barraclough, Joseph Barrows, Lucy Bleach, Jane Busby, Brian Coates, Monica Coates, Jack Daniels, Amanda Davies, Susie Findlay, Joybelle Frasson, Neil Haddon, Andrew Harper, Bill Hart, Derek Hart, Morgan Hart, Maria Kunda, Colin Langridge, Fiona Lee, John Lendis, Celia Lendis, Dale Lewis, Verena Oeltjen, Rod Payne, Suan Payne, Daniel Petrov, Emidio Puglielli, Lucienne Rickard, Caz Rodwell, Neil Rowe, Richard Skinner, Mary Scott, Tristan Stowards, Bec Tudor, Lucia Usmiani, Chris Usmiani, Annabel Watkins, Billie Watkins, June Watkins, Philip Watkins, Dean Vaughn Williams and Alan Young.

I give deepest thanks to my inspiring and supportive partner/audio technician/advisor, Matt Warren, for his audio, technical and practical advice, and for his infinite patience and constant moral support.

Contents

Chapter 1: Central argument..... 9

Preliminary works..... 10

Amateur 14

Ways of screening 16

Chapter 2: The Project in Context.....18

Illusion: Yuan Goang-Ming and Tony Oursler 18

Those were the best days of my life..... 21

Neither Rock n’ Roll nor its audience are homogenous 25

We are family... 27

Women on camera and the nature of video 30

Much too sad: Bas Jan Ader 34

Telling the truth: Gillian Wearing 39

Trust me: Erwin Wurm..... 44

Nothing: Peter Weir and Thomas Struth..... 48

Chapter 3: How the Project was Pursued.....51

Stage 1 – Early Works..... 51

Stage 2 - Physical Experimentation..... 55

Stage 3 - Refining Content and Selection of Works 65

Conclusion.....77

Bibliography79

Appendices.....82

Appendix 1: The process for fitting a projection to a custom surface. 82

Appendix 2: List of works completed through the research. 84

Appendix 3: Filmography..... 86

Appendix 4: Discography..... 87

Appendix 5: List of illustrations 88

Appendix 6: DVD Content List..... 97

Appendix 7: Curriculum Vitae..... 100

Chapter 1: Central argument

There is an extensive body of existing contemporary artworks that explores popular music; from Pipilotti Rist's *I'm not the girl who misses much* to Sue & Phil Dodd's self-penned *Gossip Pop* performances and videos. There is also an established history of using time-based media as records of performance: the works of Bruce Nauman and Vito Acconci for instance: and there are works that fit both categories, for example Gillian Wearing's. Against that corpus, this project aims to develop a specific artist/audience relationship: a recognisable connection between artist and audience via shared roles as music fan, consumer, and as humans observing their own biographies irrevocably punctuated by the music that passes through and underscores it. I have pursued this aim through relatively transparent processes and technical means, and through rigorous selection and overproduction of works and their constituent material. Through careful editing of a wider body of work and a practice of shooting an excess of source material from which each individual work is created, I have selected works that most effortlessly communicate a heightened connection of the individual to their personal soundtrack. It must be established at the outset that the performance is not the work and the video is not its documentation. The video is the work and the performance simply the means of making it.

Included with this exegesis is documentation of my studio research in the form of three DVDs. The first contains preliminary works, the second contains support material and the third contains the four works that constitute the thesis exhibition.

Preliminary works

Over a period of many years my practice has consisted of self-portraits and autobiographical works in a variety of media. It was not until a Canadian residency at *The Western Front* in Vancouver in 2001 that I had ever considered performance as being a highly suited medium for my impetus or urge to act out a fanciful idea, or to realize a thought with immediacy, irrespective of its later manifestation. There began my explorations in performance video.

Throughout the Vancouver residency I produced works in which the performances were undertaken alone, and existed as complete artworks only in their recorded state. That is to say, the performances were undertaken to camera for the purpose of producing a video. No audience was present. One work, *Two monitors demonstrate how Britney Spears is both catalyst for finding the inner child and portal to carnal self-gratification* (2001), was the catalyst for continued explorations through popular music and experimental video formats.

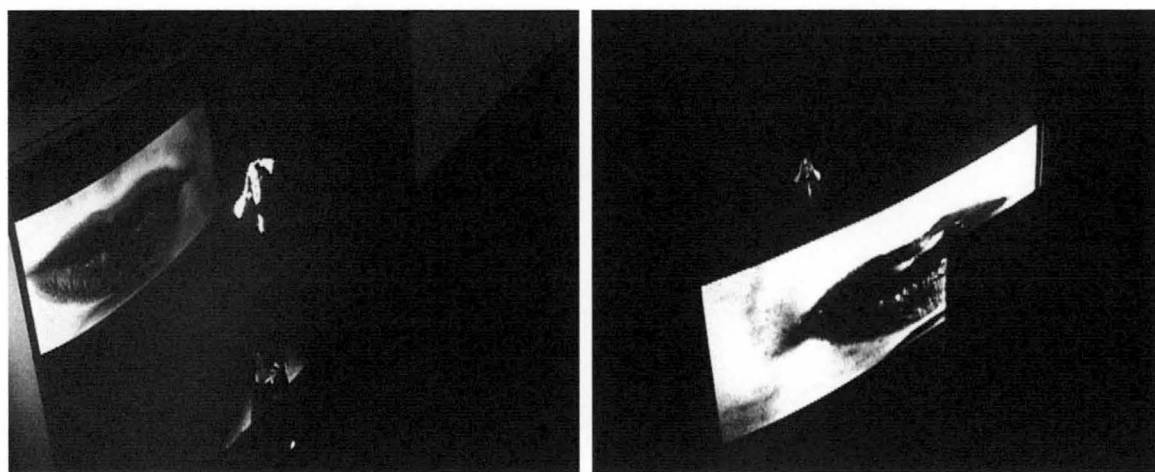


Figure 1. *Two monitors demonstrate how Britney Spears is both catalyst for finding the inner child and portal to carnal self-gratification* (2001)

The Vancouver works were produced while I was deeply mired in a melancholic homesickness. I was driven by a need for self-comfort, and I imagined I could attain it by revisiting my childhood practice of learning the dance routines featured in pop and rock music videos. I documented and screened these activities on a single monitor. A second monitor featured a shot of my mouth reciting collated pornographic references, yielded from Googling the Internet in search of Britney Spears videos. The double monitors were presented facing one another; each mirroring the other, while simultaneously displaying its own content.

Other works from Vancouver, such as *Spots before my eyes (and a sound of distant crying)* (2001), were also driven by a combination of homesickness and a compulsion to explore new methods of video display. In this work the mostly black video is occasionally ruptured by a small bubble of image sourced from the home movies of my childhood. The audio track orchestrated from the combined sounds of water, dogs, lawnmowers and the screech of peacocks (the sounds of my childhood environment) combine in what is, to me, a soothing lullaby. The flexibility of projection and the establishment of new physical presences for video had become the focus of my explorations. This also became a major concern within this project, and is discussed further in Chapter Three.



Figure 2. *Spots before my eyes (and a sound of distant crying)* (2001)

With apologies (2001) was a single channel video shot sideways, to be shown on a household monitor turned on its side. This use of a 'portrait' monitor format, rather than the usual 'landscape' format, was intended to simulate a skewed consciousness much in the manner of the tilted camera angle used in a Hitchcock film. It functions as a visual clue that indicates *all is not well*. I appear wearing headphones, accompanied by a soundtrack of myself reciting a list of current grievances and disappointments, and self-consciously apologising for the content of the work. Eventually, it is revealed that what the viewer is watching is me, listening to the same soundtrack. A small text instruction at the foot of the screen 'Please do not adjust the volume,' encourages the audience to take on the role of confessor and to listen quietly at close-quarters.



Figure 3. *With apologies* (2001)

The 2001 installation *A Loft*, was produced on my return to Australia and exhibited at LSSp (Letitia Street Studios project) space.⁵ It followed the pattern of camera-recorded performance and took the form of two large digital prints on canvas, which depicted me within a domestic setting wearing a large bird mask and practicing attempts to take flight. These were exhibited with a variety of objects for use by my masked identity: giant seed balls and human-scaled equivalents of the traditional budgie mirror and ladder complete with bells. The only window in the exhibition space overflowed with seed from the sill. A review of the show described it this way:

The figure, presumably the artist, is wearing a rubber bird's head (a tragi-comic raptor/rooster/parrot?) and is otherwise completely clad in comforting clothes: loose, formless, around-the-house style wear. Masked and veiled, the artist is without a body, a bird performing – safe from the audience.⁶



Figure 4. Image from *A Loft* (2001)

⁵ *A Loft*. Installation at LSSp Space, Hobart. November 30 – December 9 2001.

⁶ Duncan Bligh, 'Sally Rees: *A Loft*', (Exhibition Review), *Artlink*, Volume 22, No.1, 2002, p. 89.

These preliminary works served the crucial function of familiarising my real self with my video/photo-self, and allowed me to adjust and become comfortable with the new and very intimate relationship I had developed with the camera. In this way these early works allowed me to find my feet as both videographer/photographer and subject. This growing familiarity became evident as my work progressed. My self-consciousness decreased, and my ability to separate my own identity from my video representation during post-production grew. This separation and lack of conscious performance has been beneficial in that it has allowed the works to remain personal and authentic, and enabled me to overcome a level of self-censorship, born of shyness.

Amateur

As a young, classically trained singer, I dreamed of training in opera. A music teacher advised that there was more to being a great musician than the perfection achieved through grueling practice and study. In his eyes I needed something more. He said, ‘If you really want to be an interesting musician I suggest you go to art school’.

I invested my passions in art and, as my enjoyment of singing was overridden by a crippling fear of live performance, I eventually took up his suggestion, effectively abandoning the dream of being a musician. I was always aware that to achieve greatness one needed more than dedication: one needed a gift. In the world of professional musicians, simply having a “nice voice” was insufficient.

My vocal liberation came when I discovered my own enjoyment in listening to a friend howl along, unselfconsciously, with a radio. She was unable to hit a single note with accuracy, but her voice rang out loud and crackled with a passion and enthusiasm that moved me more than anything musical had for

some time. I came from a musical discipline where to vocalise required concentration and discipline. This was something very different. She and I screeched along to The Who, Madonna, Soundgarden and Christian Television Advertisements, to Kylie Minogue on long car trips, and on adjacent treadmills at the gym, and to Michael Jackson (only his early material, of course!) during Sunday evening Scrabble games.

Through my friend's vocalisations, I found my love for loud, tuneless singing, performed alone while doing housework, in the car or, most exhilaratingly, with a drunken group of friends. To my ear, it is the verve of these performances that re-invests the lyrical content of pop songs with a depth of emotion and passion that befits the manner in which we preciously protect them from changing times and fashions. Similarly, my enjoyment of talent-less dancing is borne of companionable and exhausting sessions where friends and I might hurl ourselves wildly, in poor approximation of recognisable steps and styles. Within the intimate space of friendship, such apparently ridiculous activity is encouraged, precisely because it is a demonstration of trust, and with this trust many social filters are disengaged to create the means for heightened expression.

I choose to perform in this manner in order to engage this audible/visible passion and to remove the audience from the role of critic. The performances are deliberately lacking in finesse, and they allow the viewer respite from deciding whether or not they like the performance of the song in a traditional context. Instead, the performances provide a space for the viewer to consider the true content of each video work: the emotional level of the performance, the scenario, and why these elements might be brought together in such a fashion.

Ways of screening

In undertaking this research I endeavoured to find methods to heighten the accessibility of each work. While undeniably rooted in the artist's identity, the primary aim of these works is to establish an intimate artist-audience connection, with the work as the conduit. Initially, I felt that this affinity could be achieved through an instructive approach of devising performances that acted as signifiers of my emotional investment. I coupled this with strict adherence to the action, with no manipulation and no editing. I later came to rely more heavily on my choice of content to develop the desired intimacy, rather than the personal revelation by re-enactment. This approach fosters an easier relationship between the viewer and the work by broadening its reading beyond my own experience.

Frustrated by off-the-cuff audience remarks reflecting a general dislike and weariness of 'video art', I wanted the work to be embraced, not dismissed on the basis of its medium. My initial explorations into how to overcome this obstacle was based on reasoning that accessibility might be established by dissolving the landscape-format rectangle dictated by 'normal' video presentation modes. I rationalised that if the work were less immediately identifiable as video, and appeared simply as an image or object (in other words, if the form were not immediately recognisable as video), perhaps the viewer who felt strongly anti-video could be seduced into staying longer. I experimented with cropped images in works such as *Paranoid* (2002), and *POP* (2003) in an attempt to reinvent the video format. I then began to introduce custom-made screen configurations to display the projections (*TIT* and *Intermission*, both 2003). The presentation of these works was visually slick and engaging, but while the effect was satisfying, their new status as 'objects' (as opposed to simply screen-based works) seemed to overshadow, rather than enhance, their content. Ideas for presentation methods were, for the most part,

paired with ideas for content in the chronology of inception. As a result, the content (my primary concern) became lost amongst the ‘sleight of hand’ and, ultimately, I was at a loss to defend these visual ‘tricks’ conceptually.

After a number of investigations, I decided that these experimental screening devices were visual gimmicks that relegated the content of the work to a secondary position. On reaching this conclusion, I discarded these presentation techniques in favour of single-channel projections. This simpler format fulfilled my ultimate aim: to create a compelling image where, experientially, the medium is of secondary importance and the relationship between artist and audience can develop unhindered. Through test screenings and exhibitions, I came to discern that despite my misgivings about a widespread dissatisfaction with video art on the basis of its format, what the viewer of these works was most responsive to *was* the content. My protective attitude towards the medium of video became my justification to champion the single-channel format. Instead of attempting to dupe an unsuspecting audience, like concealing a bitter tablet in a spoon of jam, I began to relish the opportunity to change my viewers’ minds about video through the development of a sense of meaning, gained as a result of personal engagement with the content of the work.

While the content has remained steadfastly rooted in my performances of (and accompanied by) popular music, the works that constitute this thesis vary in their individual explorations of my relationship to each particular song: a discomforting visual slither in *The Groove* (2002); a dance of exorcism in *Mustang Sally* (2003); a comparative, formal whisper of sorrow in *Encore* (2004-05); and the realisation of a long-held fantasy in the feel-good group hug of *The Last Farewell* (2005).

Chapter 2: The Project in Context

To contextualise this project, in the following discussion I have included artists, curators, filmmakers and writers who demonstrate and explore affinities with my core areas of interest: the role that popular music plays in our lives; the development and existence of an artist/audience trust; documentary related practice (i.e. telling the truth), and developments in video presentation and screening formats.

Illusion: Yuan Goang-Ming and Tony Oursler



Figure 5. Yuan Goang-Ming, *Fish on a dish* (1992)

Yuan Goang-Ming and Tony Oursler use video projection as a means of animating an object. This was a strategy I employed through much of my research but eventually discarded in favour of a more reductive approach. In *Fish on a dish* (1992) Goang-Ming elegantly transfers the image of a circling

goldfish onto a large white ceramic platter on the floor through video projection. Of this work the artist says:

In retrospect, my main motivation for this early piece was to resolve the problem of having images continually be composed, cropped or framed by the television screen. It was extremely limiting to always experience an image in this way. Therefore in this piece, I projected the image from above and eliminated the square television screen altogether from the viewing experience.⁷

His simple act of image displacement is magical to view. While the method of display is entirely transparent, one can't stop an urge to dip one's hand into the 'water', to catch the fish in the palm of your hand. I initially hoped to capture the viewers of my work through the production of a similar level of engagement and sense of wonder. In a similar way, Tony Oursler's videos use multiple projections of faces onto white featureless dolls and sculptural shapes, and of eyes onto white balls. Our reaction as viewers of Oursler's work is similar to our urge to catch Goang-Ming's fish: we just can't believe our eyes.

Urban legend suggests that screenings of one of the first cinematic images, a train pulling into the station shot by the Lumiere Brothers, caused people to run in terror. Having no reference to the moving image, they feared that the object was real and that they would be crushed. Artists like Oursler and Goang-Ming have successfully reignited this historical sense of the power of the magical moving image and, in doing so, have reinvigorated the medium of video with a power to captivate.

⁷ *Close-up: Contemporary art from Taiwan* online catalogue (Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Canada) http://aggv.bc.ca/taiwan/yuan_goang-ming.htm accessed April 14, 2005.



Figure 6. Tony Oursler, *Smirk* (2003)

A large portion of my studio research was devoted to the development of illusionary screening methods, similar to those of Oursler and Goang-Ming, with the aim of engaging my viewers through this captivating power. It was ultimately my interest in truth, and a strong connection to reality and autobiography, that led me to reject illusionary methods. While these methods were certainly engaging, they ultimately created a distance between the viewer and the content, and so worked at odds with my aim to make authentic connections between the two. I discovered a need to re-focus on the subject of my project: my autobiographical soundtrack.

*Those were the best days of my life...*⁸

When detachedly performing routine housework, my brain may switch to its punk channel and I find myself singing:

I got something to say

I killed your baby today

Doesn't matter much to me

As long as it's dead...

(Misfits, *Last Caress*)⁹

It's a childish song in its effect. Composed to shock and guaranteed to upset your parents (particularly with its further lyric of raping your mother), it's still a catchy tune. When I sing it to myself while vacuuming, the words dissolve into simple sounds and conjure images of a dank, smoky flat, overflowing with people. I am kissing a boy I hardly know in the laundry, just off the kitchen. We are both drunk on a surfeit of bourbon that a friend has pilfered from a bottle shop. The boy has *fantastic* hair.

The meaning of the song is no longer the juvenile threat of infanticide, instead it's about me: one of the vital ingredients of my autobiography. It is one of the thousands of songs I retain as both marker of time and a talisman that protects me – in this case from forgetting the fun of youthful irresponsibility.

A recording of a close friend singing one for her favourite songs, Bob Dylan's *This Wheel on Fire*, was played at her funeral. Soon afterwards, a relative sent me the tape. At that stage in my life, I couldn't predict a time when I would be

⁸ Bryan Adams, *The Summer of '69*, from the album *Reckless*, Bryan Adams (1984), A & M Records (U.S.).

⁹ Glenn Danzig, *Last Caress*. From the EP *Beware*, The Misfits (1980), Cherry Red Records (U.K.)

able to listen to this song again. These days I can; and I now acknowledge the power it has in my autobiography. It is overwhelming. This song's status has shifted within my memory; from generic to personal. It has become a specific mnemonic to personal tragedy. I do not attribute this power entirely to sentiment – some credit must go to Dylan – yet, my investment in *Wheels on Fire* is inseparable from the circumstances in which I heard it on that day. On this topic Grossberg writes:

Music as an environment constructs and maps the rhythms, tempos, and intensities of our activities. In a sense it determines where we stop and make an investment in the world; where we stop and say, 'This matters, this place is important, this kind of activity is important. I am going to stop here and this will become a part of my identity. This is where I will expend my energy-this place will become a marker of my itinerary, of the structure of my everyday life'.¹⁰

Popular music works as calendar and diary, simultaneously marking time and holding the weight of autobiographical detail through personal association. Nick Hornby has devoted an entire book to listing the songs that hold a place in his life. In *31 Songs*¹¹, he relates his personal connections to his 'Top 3' at the time of writing. These songs are as diverse as Gregory Isaacs performing *Puff the Magic Dragon* (one of the few ways to hold the attention of Hornby's severely autistic son), and Led Zeppelin's *Heartbreaker* (a track joyfully rediscovered after his realisation that 'the rock riff is nutritionally essential', but had become absent from his middle-aged musical diet). Hornby encapsulates Grossberg's theory of affect in the following passage about Bruce Springsteen's *Thunder Road*:

...sometimes, very occasionally, [songs] express who you are, perfectly. And they don't do this in words or images, necessarily; the connection is a lot less direct and more complicated than that. ...So even though I'm not American, no longer young, hate cars and can

¹⁰ Lawrence Grossberg, *Dancing in Spite of Myself: Essays on Popular Culture*, Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1997, p. 282.

¹¹ Nick Hornby, *31 Songs*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2003

understand why so many people find Springsteen bombastic and histrionic, Thunder Road somehow manages to speak for me.¹²

By way of further example, Hornby's screenplay, *High Fidelity* (adapted from his 1996 novel of the same title), centres on protagonist Rob Gordon. Gordon is barely saved from being a young adult slacker of the 1990s by the fact that he runs his own record store (for record, read vinyl). Barely a business, the store really functions as a venue for Gordon and his two employees, Dick and Barry, to exercise their imagined superiority (gained through an encyclopaedic knowledge of pop music) on whomever may wander in.



Figure 7. John Cusack as Rob Gordon in *High Fidelity* (2000)

The plot revolves around Rob's recently failed relationship, which leads him to examine all of the defunct relationships in his life via the soundtracks that accompanied their blossoming and subsequent failure. In the film's opening sequence, Rob muses on the connections between pop music and his disastrous love history.

What came first? The music or the misery? People worry about kids playing with guns, or watching violent videos. That some culture of

¹² Ibid. p. 12.

violence will take them over. Nobody worries about kids listening to thousands, literally thousands, of songs about heartbreak, rejection, misery, pain, loss. Did I listen to pop music because I was miserable? Or was I miserable because I listened to pop music?¹³

Rob lists his 'Top 5' relationship break-ups in the same way that he, Dick and Barry continually list and re-list their various 'Top 5' music lists: 'Top 5 Monday Morning Songs', 'Top 5 B-Sides', etc. Rob's response to his latest break-up is to re-organise his record collection: not alphabetically, not chronologically but autobiographically.

I can tell you how I got from Deep Purple to Howling Wolf in just 25 moves and if I want to find the song Landslide, by Fleetwood Mac, I have to remember that I bought it for someone in the fall of 1983 pile, but didn't give it to them for personal reasons.¹⁴

¹³ *High Fidelity* (2000). Directed by Stephen Frears. Screenplay by Nick Hornby, Steve Pink, John Cusack and D.V. De Vincentis Touchstone Pictures.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Neither Rock n' Roll nor its audience are homogenous

This aspect of music consumption identified by Grossberg, is important to this project. It points to the fact that it is impossible to predict a person's listening tastes with any certainty. A fan of country music may not like all country and western songs. Indeed, their favourite song may be 'a little more Motown than country'. Grossberg identifies this unpredictability as the other defining quality of music (in this case, rock/pop): heterogeneity. To view someone else's CD collection is an action guaranteed to surprise, and is an effective warning against making premature assumptions about others.

It is this impossibility of predicting another's musical tastes that assists me to avoid picturing society as an amorphous mass; to find, instead, a culture rich with individuality. I do not know that you play Michael Buble at dinner parties and Meatloaf when alone, but I'm happy that the possibility exists. This phenomenon elicits both private shame and private revelry in equal measure (both heightened emotions produced within an intimate space). It also means that this phenomenon is important to my consideration of the audience for this body of work. No assumptions can be made.

I continue to generate works from a very personal perspective, however the works that constitute my thesis contain songs chosen not only for their resonance with me but, to some extent, for their likely presence in the minds of a general audience. While the development of these works became a personally cathartic exercise for me, they are intended to provide a space for the viewer to explore their own experience. It is for this reason that I generally sort my internal 'platterlogue'¹⁵ by selecting tracks likely to be recognisable to a broad audience. In this way, I attempt to strike a balance between the work being 'all about me', and being 'all about who I think you – my audience – are'.

¹⁵ A term used by record stores for the listing of available recordings.

The distinct listening choices of individuals and their autobiographical reference are explored in *Crazy* (1999), a documentary film produced in the Netherlands.¹⁶ *Crazy* presents a series of stories from recruits in the Netherlands' armed forces, where each describes their time in combat zones through the music they associate with that period. Each story is focused around a particular song, and each segment concludes with the referenced track played out in full while the camera remains static on the face of the muted storyteller.



Figure 8. Stills from *Crazy* (1999)

For one man, it is the title song of the film, *Crazy*, performed by Seal. For another, Guns n' Roses performing *Knockin' on Heavens Door* propels his memory straight back to driving trucks loaded with humanitarian aid supplies through a well-known sniper route. Stoic men and women are each in turn reduced to tears. As the lights came up in the cinema where I first viewed the film, I found myself surrounded by an audience of middle aged men, sitting alone, quietly weeping into their hands at the recognition of their own stories.

¹⁶ *Crazy* (1999). Directed by Heddy Honigmann. (Pieter van Huystee Film & TV.)

Personal unspoken histories filled the room as powerfully as those on the screen. It was palpable that I was amongst a group of individuals reliving their experience collectively.

*We are family...*¹⁷

As a member of a collective music audience, we adopt and give permission for a particular pop star and/or their song to represent us in the world. This act of substitution is particularly vivid throughout the fragile period of adolescence and early adulthood. As we imbue the hit songs of adolescence with a talismanic power to represent a particular time, place or event, then the trite lyrics of a sugary-sweet, three minute throwaway ditty can become a mantra to our lives. When one is not yet skilled in expressing the depth of one's own emotion, a pop song makes an excellent stand-in. Even as an adult, the pre-packaged intent of a popular lyric can be a less threatening device for communication than expressing one's own turgid feelings. We begin to assume ownership of the lyricist's expressions through such use.

In his unusual book, *Words and Music: A History of Pop in the Shape of a City*¹⁸, Paul Morley describes the history and phenomenon of popular music through a journey to an unnamed city. On this journey (undertaken with Kylie Minogue as chauffeur), Morley makes the following observation:

As the listener I am the final element in the making of the music. I have made the music useful. I have put it into a context: the context of my own life...¹⁹

¹⁷ Nile Rodgers/Bernard Edwards, *We are family*. Single released by Sister Sledge (1979) Cotillion/Atlantic Records (U.S.).

¹⁸ Paul Morley, *Words and Music: A History Of Pop In The Shape Of A City*, London: Bloomsbury, 2003

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 2.

Morley's suggestion that he completes the music he hears may seem slightly egotistical, yet I recognise the logic of his proposition that authorship/ownership of a creative work is incomplete until it has fulfilled its purpose as something that is received by a viewer or audience (which, in the case of music, is to be heard).

Not surprisingly then, the phenomena of the mixtape²⁰, though out-moded, proliferates even in this time of home-made CDs and MP3 files. When my older brother left for university he would send me tapes that gave me a glimpse of his new adult life and the sound track it entailed. A past flatmate and I, family-bound to long distance drives to the northwest of the state, bonded and argued over the content of our Driving North tape, although we always agreed on AC/DC performing *Baby, Please Don't Go* and Alice Cooper's *I'm Eighteen*. I've made and been given tapes for washing up, party tapes, tapes for depression, tapes for anger. I've used them to keep in touch with loved ones and to share new musical discoveries or indicators of my mood.

In 2002, researchers from Hamburg University's Ethnological Institute in Germany, Gerrit Herlyn and Thomas Overdick, undertook a study, *Cartridge Stories*²¹. This study, sparked by the fortieth anniversary of the cassette tape, involved the collection and analysis of mix-tapes, along with interviews with both the makers and receivers of the tapes. They discovered that these tapes worked as a perilous hinge on which relationships were made or broken apart. In one cited interview, a Hamburg man's partner had threatened to leave him

²⁰ A mixtape is a homemade compilation of songs recorded in a specific order onto audio cassette, generally intended for private use, as a soundtrack to social events, or as a gift. Mix tapes, which usually reflect the musical tastes of a single compiler, can range from a casually selected list of favorite songs, to a conceptual mix of songs linked by theme or mood, to a highly personal statement tailored to the tape's intended recipient. Many mixtape enthusiasts believe that by carefully selecting and ordering the tracks in a mix, an artistic statement can be created that is greater than the sum of its individual songs.

²¹ Ian Harrison, 'The Naked Tape', *Mojo* magazine, issue 103, June 2002, 2002, p. 26

when she discovered that he was about to record over a tape that he had made her in the early stage of their relationship. Fellow researcher, DJ Frauke Wilke, writes, ‘those tapes were not about the music anymore, they were magic objects that made her fall in love with him. Would you want to kill that magic?’²²

²² Ibid.

Women on camera and the nature of video

In 2000 Maria Troy curated the anthology *I Say I Am: Women's Performance Video from the 1970's*. Her accompanying essay contains some succinct points about the relationship between the female artist, video and performance.²³ Troy begins by quoting Chris Straayer.

The subject matter of 1970s performance video was personal, often articulated in the direct address of an artist performing alone. Autobiography, identity, relation of self to others, questioning the female stereotypes, and the expansion of self through personae were recurrent themes.²⁴

Troy cites video as being a logical medium for the female conceptual artist of this period. With women visibly absent as makers from art history, the relatively new mediums of both video and performance had no history of the exclusion of women, and so women could more easily adopt them as their own. Another important advantage to video was its facilitation of intimacy. Artists could perform acts in front of the camera that they may not be able to do in front of a live audience. In addition, these acts could be replayed indefinitely. Troy says, 'Through video, the performance could become endlessly present, always enacted for the first time'. In other words, the performance could immediately become as it would forever be, identical at every viewing.

This combination of private performance and perpetual replay remains immensely attractive to me, a contemporary female video maker. As a performer, I find a live audience inhibitive. My awareness of being watched makes me nervous, unnatural and slightly out of control. In contrast, in my relationship with my camera, I have the privacy, comfort, and space to make

²³ Maria Troy, *I Say I Am: Women's Performance Video from the 1970s*. PDF document (isayiam-1.pdf) accessed at <http://www.vdb.org>, March 13 2005. Path: Video Data Bank/Anthologies/I Say I Am/I Say I Am essay.

²⁴ Ibid. p. 1.

mistakes that I can integrate or reject. I can endlessly review material and re-perform until I achieve the result I want.

The works collected and cited in Troy's *I Say I Am* are identified as sharing aesthetic qualities inextricably tied to the limitations of the technology of the period, 'long takes; little or no editing; little or no camera movement; and direct address to the viewer'.²⁵ These are all identifiable aspects of my own work. However, in the case of Troy's collection, these features arise out of technological limitations, whereas I have the benefit of advanced technology. I shoot with a broadcast (in the contemporary sense) quality camera and am able to handle post-production in a precise, digital environment. I am able to benefit from these advances, but for a number of reasons, I have adopted similar aesthetic devices and opted for simple technological solutions. I have deliberately retained the qualities identified by Troy for the simplicity they afford my delivery.

My works are created from long, single camera, takes. The editing is minimal, if it appears at all, and the camera is consistently static. Extended, fixed takes are a by-product of the dual role of camera operator and performer but, in combination with the controlled minimisation of editing, they additionally underpin the stress upon real-time activity. The camera does not change its frame. Instead an activity simply unfolds before it, giving weight to the actuality of the event.

I propose that these structural devices alert the viewer to the fact that what they see is a record of something real. This is an essential element in the building of trust between artist and audience, and this trust is necessary for building intimacy. Intimacy with the artist through the work is also induced by performances directed down the lens of the camera to the audience. Given the

²⁵ Ibid. p. 2.

personal nature of these works, there is always the potential for the viewer's response to disintegrate into a response of the voyeur. These structural filming techniques negate voyeurism by returning the viewer's gaze from the image itself, the returned look creating a two-way relationship between viewer and subject.

Another inherent quality of video documented performance from the 1970's is the low quality of the image. Reminiscent of documentary films, it is thus suggestive of actual, lived experience or reality. In 1973, in his article *The Form and Sense of Video*, Robert Arn discusses the nature of the real in time-based media.

The nexus of image/reality is the catalyst of a whole branch of video art that might misleadingly be called documentary, but is, I suspect closer to some sort of reality repair.... Trapped as we seem to be in the cliché of alienation, we seek corroboration of our existence, and video is on its way to being a mirror for the masses. The displacement of reality into the conventions of representation leads us to paraphrase Descartes – I appear on screen, therefore I am.²⁶

Arn recognises the suspension of disbelief that comes with this technological territory. It is a common feature of performance video. Its documentary tone gives a convincing illusion of actuality. My research responds to a contemporary, more media-savvy audience by minimising the use of illusion. In contrast to the methods that Arn described in 1973, I have at my disposal more advanced technologies that I employ to enhance the artwork. While the emotion and action in each work is real, this is not reality television, nor do I expect the viewer to suspend disbelief. I assume that my audience has an implicit understanding that what they are watching is not real-life, but an artwork drawn from life. The previously described strategies for reducing

²⁶ Robert Arn *The Form and Sense of Video* (1973). PDF document (183 –190.pdf) accessed at *The Form and Sense of Video*, http://www.vasulka.org/Kitchen/PDF_Eigenwelt/pdf/183-190.pdf. March 7 2005.

associations of voyeurism (direct address to-camera and the returned gaze), also operate to underscore the works acknowledgement of its status as something other than documentary or documentation.

High-quality digital video and postproduction techniques allow smooth composition of the work via layering, split-screen and speed and image control, all of which enhance the realisation of concept. Again, these image control devices help to distance the viewer from the position of voyeur by indicating that, in their obviously cultivated form, these videos are designed to be seen.

Much too sad: Bas Jan Ader

The catalyst for my research methodology was a 1970 work, *I'm Too Sad to Tell You*, by Dutch-American Bas Jan Ader.²⁷ I first saw this self-portrait as a postcard.²⁸ Photographs of Ader weeping were sent to colleagues and friends with his handwritten message, 'I'm too sad to tell you' inscribed on the card. I was shaken by my immediate connection to this particular artist. I believed the statement of his title unquestioningly. I was aware that full disclosure of the intimate details of pain can often only bring indignity with it - so why explain more?

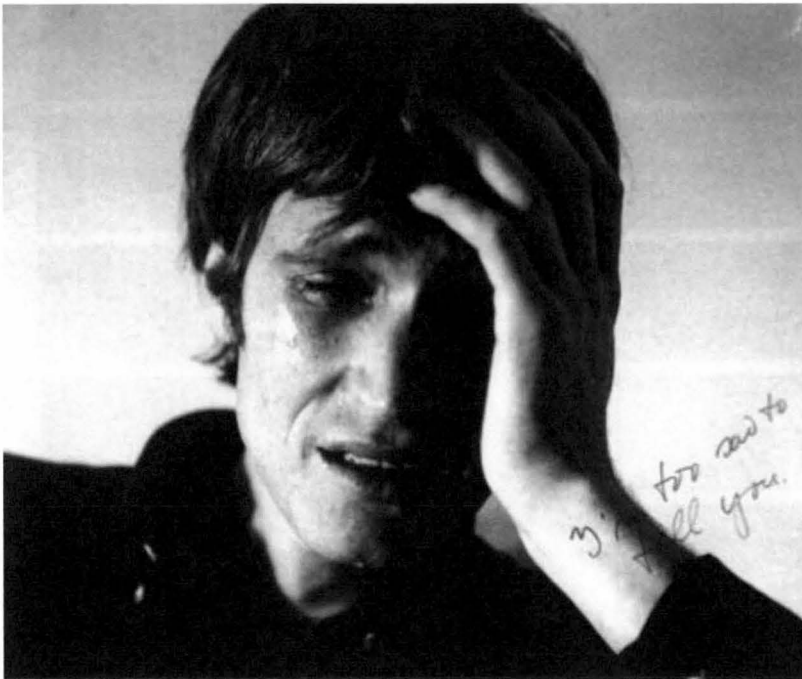


Figure 9. Bas Jan Ader, *I'm too sad to tell you* (1970)

On viewing *I'm Too Sad to Tell You*, I was reminded of an early episode of the animated series *The Simpsons*, in which Lisa Simpson is sent home from school

²⁷ Ader emigrated to the U.S.A. in 1963 as a deckhand on an Englishman's yacht, at the age of twenty-one, where he studied fine art and eventually became a lecturer at Irvine University.

²⁸ The work existed as postcards, photographs and two films staged in both 1970 and 1971

for refusing to play dodge-ball because, in her words, 'I'm too sad'.²⁹ The episode focuses on the family's attempts to find the reason for Lisa's sadness and their many unproductive attempts to cheer her up. In an episode strangely lacking in action for a prime-time animated sitcom, the depths of Lisa's sorrow are explored. The cause can never be identified. This question remains unanswered as the episode ends with her mother Marge, defiantly defending her daughter's right to her own emotions, 'You wanna be sad Honey, you be sad'. It is this show of unquestioning support that, in the end, enables Lisa to smile again.

This type of faith is all Ader asks of his audience, and I of mine. I trust that Ader was indeed truly sad. I have faith in his sorrow. To insist upon more information or evidence would be to somehow break his trust in me as a viewer and for me to trust him in turn. I am moved to show him the same unquestioning support.

In his essay on Ader's work, Brad Spence describes *I'm Too Sad to Tell You* as a kind of memento of Ader's inner emotional state, saying, 'In his inability to give an appropriate voice to his heartache, he instead produces a souvenir of that experience'.³⁰

My own work also attempts to souvenir something from a particular experience by revisiting that experience for the camera. The resulting videos could be described as postcards from an emotional location within a musical space. The specific affect and effect of each song is impossible for me to share without undertaking these re-lived experiences: the original experience to which they refer is beyond any words other than the lyrical content of the song that I have attached to them.

²⁹ *Moaning Lisa*, Episode 7G06 first screened 11/2/1990

³⁰ Brad Spence, *Bas Jan Ader*, Irvine: Fine Arts Gallery, University of California, 1999, p. 40.

After many years of doubting the integrity of performance-based artists, I felt I had found an artist who told the truth, even if that truth provides no answer. I soon discovered that his works continued to evidence simple truths. A series of falls documented in film and photographs show Ader toppling from the roof of his home (*Fall I Los Angeles, 1970*), on a bicycle careering off an Amsterdam bridge (*Fall II, Amsterdam, 1970*), and dropping from the branches of a tree (*Broken Fall [Organic] Amsterdamse Bos, Holland, (1971)*).



Figure 10. Bas Jan Ader, *Broken Fall [Organic] Amsterdamse Bos, Holland* (1971)



Figure 11. Yves Klein, *Leap into the void* (1960)

He falls and that is all. Unlike Yves Klein's *Leap Into the Void* of a decade earlier, there is no doubt as to the authenticity of Ader's act, even though this act has also been performed. The self explanatory work, *All My Clothes* (1970) is, as the title suggest, all Ader's clothes laid out on the roof of his home, presented in a black and white photograph; the same roof from which he would tumble later in the year in the first of his *Falls* series.

In the reading of Ader's works the need to ask 'Why?' is noticeably absent. He was resolutely silent about any reading of his work and would rarely comment on his intention. The works are dependent on the viewer to either accept the act and the artist's motives (however the viewer may glean them) or to reject them.

By presenting his work as documentation however, he blocks the path to denial. These events happened. Why they happened is irrelevant. Ader was too sad to tell us anyway. *I'm Too Sad to Tell You* was initially presented as a black and white film that unfortunately, but perhaps appropriately, no longer exists. The moment has passed and so has the work. In the fragile form of film, the endless presence possible with video technology (identified by Maria Troy) was here halted by archival failure.³¹



Figure 12. Bas Jan Ader, Documentation of *In Search of the Miraculous (Part II)* (1975)

Ader's last work, *In Search of the Miraculous* (1975), was intended as a trilogy of works based around a journey by boat across the Atlantic Ocean. In Part One, a small choir accompanied by a piano stood in a gallery in Los Angeles

³¹ This point is arguable. The archiving of video has proved to be fraught with fragility. Tape does break, or is easily recorded over. The magnetic coating that holds the data flakes away with age, requiring a heated 'baking' technique to stabilize aged tape long enough for it to be reproduced. But it is the ease of this duplication process that truly enables video to maintain a long life.

wailing dirge-like sea shanties. Part Two would be a journey from Cape Cod, Massachusetts to Falmouth, England in a tiny twelve-foot sailboat called *Ocean Wave*. Part Three was to be a re-performance of the choral work in the Groninger museum in Holland accompanied by photographs and other documentation. His journey was expected to take sixty-seven days. Ader set sail on July 9, 1975 and his boat lost radio contact three weeks later. The remains of his boat washed ashore off the coast of Ireland the following April.

The significance of his disappearance and death escapes few as an ironic end to his fraught and brief body of work. Brad Spence mourned, 'It was Ader's misfortune and ours that his search for the impossible took place on the perilous edge of self-dissolution.'³² Similarly, Thomas Crow wrote of Ader's work and premature death,

... the personal tragedy of (Ader's) career was that he could find no other medium for this project than his own fragile body, dwarfed and lost in a global span that had not yet surrendered its immensity.³³

Ader's method seems to have been to actualise concepts of his body's potential in the world, under various conditions. It is the simplicity of these gestures, to weep, to fall or to sail (and to fail), that allows the viewer space to contemplate and attribute their own meaning to such acts. My present research strives for similar situational simplicity. My performance videos emulate the manner in which Ader's works remain simple, open and unexplained. While earlier works produced in the research were more leading and didactic, I eventually found looser, more abstract content that allowed me to be more open to a diversity of potential responses.

³² Brad Spence, *Bas Jan Ader*, Irvine: Fine Arts Gallery, University of California, 1999 p. 40.

³³ Thomas Crow, 'Bas Jan Ader: A Bridge Too Far', in *Bas Jan Ader*, Irvine: Fine Arts Gallery, University of California, 1999, p. 15.

Telling the truth: Gillian Wearing

To make her photographic work of 1992–1993, *Signs that say what you want them to say and not signs that say what someone else wants you to say*, Gillian Wearing approached members of the public with large cards and a marker pen and asked them to write down ‘something that was in their head’. She then photographed them displaying the results.

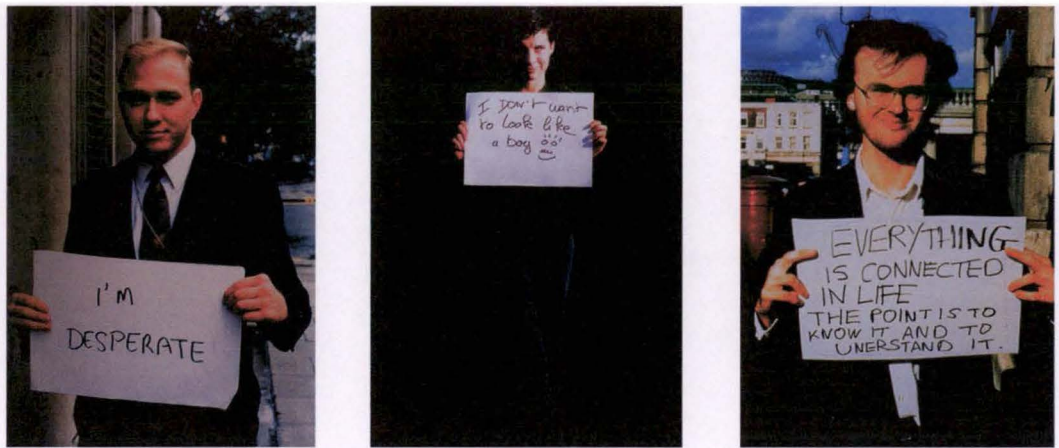


Figure 13. Gillian Wearing, Images from *Signs that say what you want them to say and not signs that say what someone else wants you to say*, (1992 - 93)

In 1994's *Confess all on video. Don't worry you will be in disguise.*

Interested? Call Gillian, masked and/or bewigged people tell stories of sexual transgressions, petty theft and sabotage to the video camera after answering Wearing's advertisement.

In works such as these Wearing can be seen to offer a public service: she gives a voice to the man-on-the-street and provides a safe space for individual expression or confession.



Figure 14. Gillian Wearing, stills from *Confess all on video. Don't worry you will be in disguise. Interested? Call Gillian*, (1994)

Whether the participants tell the truth or not, the artist is absolved. She tells/ records/ enacts the truth of the incident. Whether the truth is her subject's lie is irrelevant.



Figure 15. Gillian Wearing, Detail from *My Favourite Track*, (1994)

Wearing's *My Favourite Track* (1994) is a five-monitor installation of people singing along to Walkmans. It displays each participant's private internal soundtrack, expressed externally and separated from self-censorship by a pair of headphones. The participant's hearts are turned inside out. With self-consciousness minimized, they sing from the heart and it's not necessarily pretty, which is precisely the point. Here, rather than exhaled, the music is excreted.

In a musically connected work of the same year, *Dancing in Peckham* (1994), Wearing herself appears on video dancing wildly in a shopping mall to music only she can hear. But it is not, as first appears, Wearing ‘going off’ and displacing her own insular grooving into a public space. She is in fact imitating another woman she had observed at a concert, dancing wildly, unaware of stares and titters. By imitation, Wearing gets to reap the benefits of such abandon and, in viewing the space of this displacement, we get the opportunity to wonder why we don’t make it a habit ourselves.

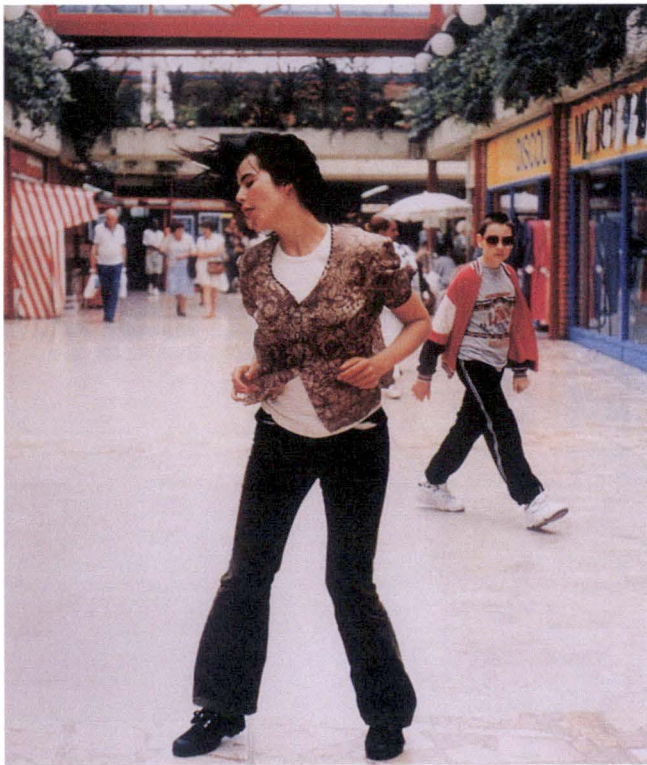


Figure 16. Gillian Wearing, still from *Dancing in Peckham*, (1994)

Trauma (2000) utilised a similar structure to *Confess...* It began with a newspaper advertisement that specifically requested stories of trauma in childhood or youth and culminated in a video. It is a much sharper work

stylistically, using plastic masks of adolescent faces rather than the ad hoc costumes in *Confess...* Wearing states her intentions this way:

I wanted the masks to transport you back to this defining moment in the wearer's lives. To a time when you wouldn't have been able to see the signs yet on their faces. When they wouldn't yet have been marked by what had happened to them.³⁴

The masks are contextualised as youthful only by their smoothness, which could be attributed to their heritage of plastic manufacture but actually lies in the lack of modelled lines. Their slightly sad mouths are motionless as muffled voices emerge from behind telling stories of great childhood sadness: stories of bullies, sexual assaults, loneliness and violence. Wearing's interest in the strange events of the lives of others seems compassionate, protective and caring.



Figure 17. Gillian Wearing, stills from *Trauma*, (2000)

Wearing's entirely mute *Self Portrait* (2000) deliberately links to *Trauma* (and therefore to *Confess...*) through the artist's act of donning a mask herself. The joke is that it is almost identical to her own face. *Self Portrait* is a photograph

³⁴ Schwabsky, Barry, 'The Voice Estranged', in *Gillian Wearing: Mass Observation*, exhibition catalogue, Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2002, p. 31.

and not a video. If Wearing confesses anything, it is not intended for us to hear. Like Ader, she keeps the detail of her own stories to herself and we can never fully understand them. The photograph is conveniently mute, leaving an audience to deduce what they will.



Figure 18. Gillian Wearing, *Self Portrait*, (2000)

It seems Wearing trusts her audience to be in on the gag. To comprehend the work one must be familiar with *Trauma* and conclude that if the participants are telling us something about their past experiences (which their masks represent), then perhaps in *Self Portrait*, Wearing is relaying something of herself as she is today (as she is represented by her mask). My own works present a similar level of disclosure as Wearing's. As many specifics are revealed as are held back: for example, the choice of song or the artist's identity might be evident; the song's specific significance or the performance's purpose might be suppressed.

Trust me: Erwin Wurm

Many of the works of Erwin Wurm are entirely dependent on the complicit cooperation of the general public and his audience. Trust must be gained and maintained. His repeated series of 'one-minute sculptures' have taken numerous forms since 1997. At times these works are presented as instructions within a gallery or, alternatively, they are realised spontaneously by friends or passers-by and are recorded photographically. In his 1998 *One Minute Sculptures* series, one work was a wooden box containing a plastic bowl, marked by an instructional line drawing to indicate that one must sit in the box with the bowl on one's head.

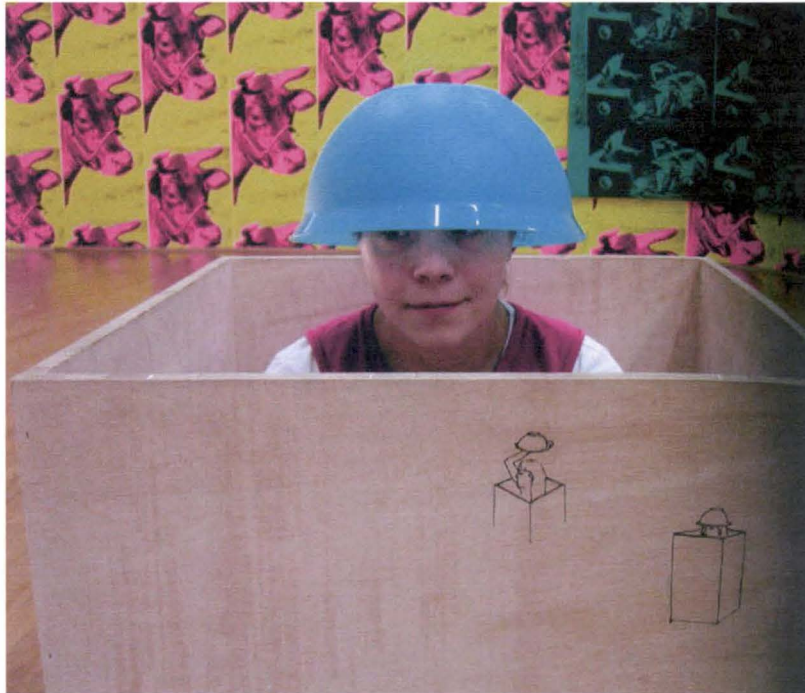


Figure 19. Erwin Wurm, *One Minute Sculpture* (1998)

In *American/Spanish Table of Conspiracy* (2003), the instructive sketch on the top of a desk-like piece of furniture indicates that two people must kneel and place their heads in the front opening. Documentation of these works always

carefully includes ‘realised by the public’ in the caption. The works are not completed until the moment of public participation.

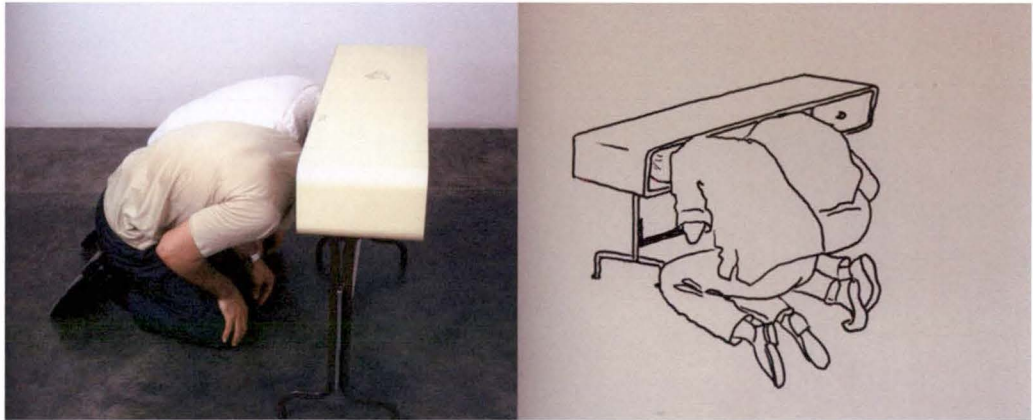


Figure 20. Erwin Wurm, *American/Spanish Table of Conspiracy* (2003)



Figure 21. Erwin Wurm, *The Bank Manger in Front of His Bank* (1999). From the *Outdoor Sculptures Cahors* series



Figure 22. Erwin Wurm, *The Police Officer's Family Wearing His Jumper* (1999). From the *Outdoor Sculptures Cahors* series

In the *Outdoor Sculptures Cahors* series (1999), Wurm's photographs record more of these instantaneous forms. In *The Bank Manager in Front of His Bank*, the manager, dressed for work in neat casuals and a tie, stands stiffly with a stick of white asparagus up each nostril. *The Police Officer's Family Wearing His Jumper*, shows a mother and daughter sharing the same garment. Both their heads protrude from the single neck hole and each claim one sleeve. His photos of *Sister Ruth* (2001) show her bent over and pressing the top of her head to the wall of a long corridor and standing casually with two fingers inserted in a bread roll.

Wurm's interest is in the production of unexpected forms intentionally created through clear directions: *Hold Your Breath and Think of Spinoza* (1998); *Pee on Someone's Rug* (2003); *Open Your Trousers and Put Flowers in It* (2002). He'll even provide the flowers.



Figure 23. Erwin Wurm, *Sister Ruth 1* (2001). From the *Brothers and Sisters* series



Figure 24. Erwin Wurm, *Sister Ruth 2* (2001). From the *Brothers and Sisters* series

Geraldine Barlow writes of these projects:

In watching others endeavour to enact the instructions, we pass through the initial temptation to laugh at the foolishness and discomfort of the procedure and begin to feel compassion for the pluck and perseverance of Wurm's performer-collaborators. Out of something close to humiliation emerges a possibility for shared humility and compassion.³⁵

I employ similar examples of displaced 'inappropriate' activity. I (or other willing participants) undergo any humiliation involved, and hope in return, that the audience will treat the works with the compassion noted by Barlow. In a similar fashion to Wurm's requirement that works be completed by an audience, I don't consider my works complete until they have been viewed, for it is in the viewing that I can gauge the impact of the work. Each performance, undertaken in solitude or as an isolated group away from the public, must also be validated by the audience viewing a record of that performance. It must be acknowledged that this event has taken place. Like Morley's view of the listener/music relationship, it is exciting to think of the artist and viewer as collaborators.

³⁵ Geraldine Barlow, 'Between a Smile and a Tear: The Instruction Drawings and One Minute Sculptures of Erwin Wurm', in *Erwin Wurm. I love my time I don't like my time*, edited by Berin Golonu with essays by Geraldine Barlow, René de Guzman and Ralph Rugoff; exhibition curated by René de Guzman. San Francisco: Yerba Buena Center for the Arts; Ostfildern-Ruit : Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2004, p. 29.

Nothing: Peter Weir and Thomas Struth

A recent re-viewing of Peter Weir's film *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1979)³⁶ clarified my interest in situational minutiae. Finely observed, seemingly insignificant details crucially underpin the dominant narrative. This seminal Australian film demonstrates how an absence of action can focus attention on detail. I was surprised, after not seeing the film for some years, how little actually happens. The plot is entirely driven by speculation and conjecture generated jointly by the characters and the direction of the film.

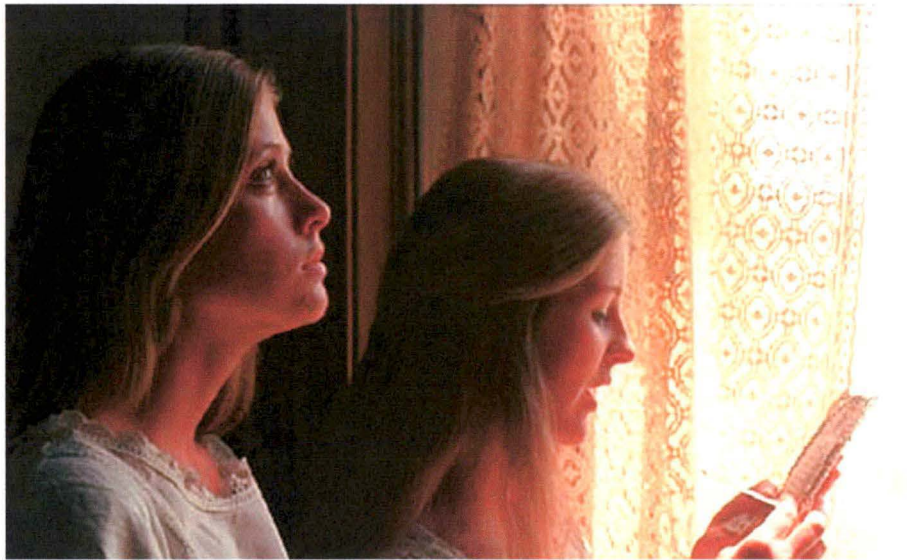


Figure 25. Still from *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1979). Directed by Peter Weir

Schoolgirls do disappear in the film, but neither the other characters nor the audience ever witness this event. What is seen, highlighted by the lack of any other information, is the way Mrs Appleyard, the ever so slightly sadistic school directress, twitches her mouth with displeasure whenever she looks at Sara, her favourite target for emotional torture. Sara's worrying paleness and

³⁶ *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1979). Directed by Peter Weir. (McElroy and McElroy Productions)

the tiny gestural nuances between the other schoolgirls speak volumes of their relationships to one another.

One of the most memorable works of the 1998 Sydney Biennale was *Video Portraits - 1 hour* by Thomas Struth (1996 – 98). As I sat surrounded by large-scale projections on four sides, I watched as each person, posing as if for a photographic portrait, gradually lost their composure. In real time, over the one-hour period, noses start to itch, a child starts to fidget, self-consciousness becomes relaxed and controlled breathing becomes even more laboured. The fascination is with the minutiae. Re-viewing *Picnic at Hanging Rock* clarified why Struth's work has remained so influential to my own research: in it, I recognise my love of discovering what lies beneath; those details overlooked in the everyday and that only become clear when, apparently, nothing else is happening.



Figure 26. Thomas Struth, still from *Video Portraits – One Hour* (1996 – 2003)

The thesis comprises works based on minimal activity. In a similar manner to John Cage's musical composition of silence, *4'33"* (1952), which highlights the

immensely full soundtrack of the environment in which it is performed (cars passing, birds singing, people breathing), the audience can find meaning in the smallest act.³⁷ In my own works, I provide the space for my audience to explore the smallest gesture: the silence of a pause, a facial tic or a nervous glance.

I enact performances repeatedly, usually alone, to a point where the line between self-consciousness (in a state of camera awareness) and unconsciousness (from the disassociation that perpetual repetition allows) become blurred. In the case of *The Last Farewell*, I invited others to join me. In all of the works the performances are devoid of any specific context: there is no plot. The material chosen for presentation exemplifies an 'oxymoronic' state, one in which the conscious performance begins to become automatic. That is to say, the performer(s) are both complicitly present and simultaneously somewhat mentally absent as the performance reaches a more mantra-like state.

When formatted to loop on DVD, these songs, which have recognisably logical beginnings and endings, instead begin again in an endless continuum, extending forever into a meditation on 'the pop and the personal'. Locked in these mantras, the viewer can observe the swelling of a tear, a stumble, a slump of weariness, lipstick on teeth or a drunken wobble. My interest here lies in revealing these seemingly innocuous visual details, as a way to draw the audience into the intimate space of the work.

³⁷ Cage J., 4'33" (1952). This work for solo piano (first performed by David Tudor) consists of the title duration of silence, the beginning and end of each phrase marked by the opening or closing of the pianos lid.

Chapter 3: How the Project was Pursued

Included with this exegesis is documentation of my studio research in the form of three DVDs. The first contains preliminary works, the second contains support material and the third contains the four works that constitute the thesis exhibition. The description of the research development that follows is predominantly chronological, but some works are best described under a different stage of progress and are listed as such.

Stage 1 – Early Works

Singing a sad song into the wind at the edge of the world

An early confusion about the scope of possibility for the direction of my research was resolved with the completion of *Singing a sad song into the wind at the edge of the world* (2002), which strongly flagged the direction I wanted to pursue. This work was initially formed as a parody of the structure of early music video clips, but responses from viewers suggested that something altogether darker and more moving was at play. The performance was devised as an emotional and physical embodiment of my personal investment in Roy Orbison's song *Crying*. I howled it to completion, off the southern end of Tasmania, regardless of physical discomfort and vocal failure.

My preferred methodology is to construct a work based on a collision of ideas. In this example I traveled far south and then shouted a song into the wind. Would it still be able to be heard? If so, what would it mean? By showing the physiologically straining performance unedited, the agony of the tuneless singing is prolonged and, while considered comic by some, it has just as often been received as a tragic work. This dual response was particularly satisfying.



Figure 27. Stills from *Singing a sad song into the wind at the edge of the world* (2002)

The choice of song for me was logical. I specifically wanted to perform a genuinely sad song and, after considering a range of options, *Crying* seemed appropriately located somewhere between maudlin and moving. While these choices may be subjective, an effort was made throughout the research project to perform songs that were familiar to a wider public.

The vocal performance was executed in multiple takes (twelve to be exact), and was shot with three cameras: one in long shot, one head shot and the third trained on my hands. The material from the third camera was never used but was intended for a second inset. These successive performances established the method by which I continued to produce all subsequent works throughout my research. This deliberate overproduction provides a range of performance options that can be used in the final work. The method has prevented me from

ever having to ‘break’ a performance during editing to artificially generate a sequence from ideal moments.

In *Sad song*, the inset headshot works to associate the piece with the music video³⁸ and also serves to highlight and reinforce the energy and stress of the performance as evidenced in my facial expressions. Whereas the long shot highlights the romanticism of geographic isolation and sets the mood of the work, details such as the tears resulting from both the action of the wind and the visible effort of singing into the wind, would be largely lost without this inset device. This work was designed from the outset as a single channel video for screen or projection.

Paranoid

Paranoid (2002) built on the successful outcomes of *Sad Song*, although it was an attempt to act out my emotional investment more directly. In the selected track, Black Sabbath’s *Paranoid*, the rather plaintive adolescent lyric is nevertheless enmeshed irretrievably in my personal history.

*I need someone to show me the things in life that I can't find
I can't see the things that make true happiness, I must be blind*

*Make a joke and I will sigh and you will laugh and I will cry
Happiness I cannot feel and love to me is so unreal*

*And so as you hear these words telling you now of my state
I tell you to enjoy life I wish I could but it's too late...*

The delivery of this performance while treading water was conceived as a challenge to myself to quite literally ‘keep my head above water’ – a phrase that aptly fits my autobiographical referencing of this song.

³⁸ I had in mind the clunky style of video produced in-house, for artists such as Air Supply and Olivia Newton John, as part of ABC’s *Countdown* program, the most influential and long-lived music show in Australia’s television history, which was screened from the late 1970s to the early 1980s.

Circular cropping was introduced as one of my first experiments in altering the standard video format. Designed for projection, or a masked monitor screen, the cropping also serves the function of blocking out irrelevant parts of the image that otherwise could not be controlled in the available shooting location. The most significant problem in this piece is the quality of the sound. This is a result of the particular choice of location: a public swimming pool.

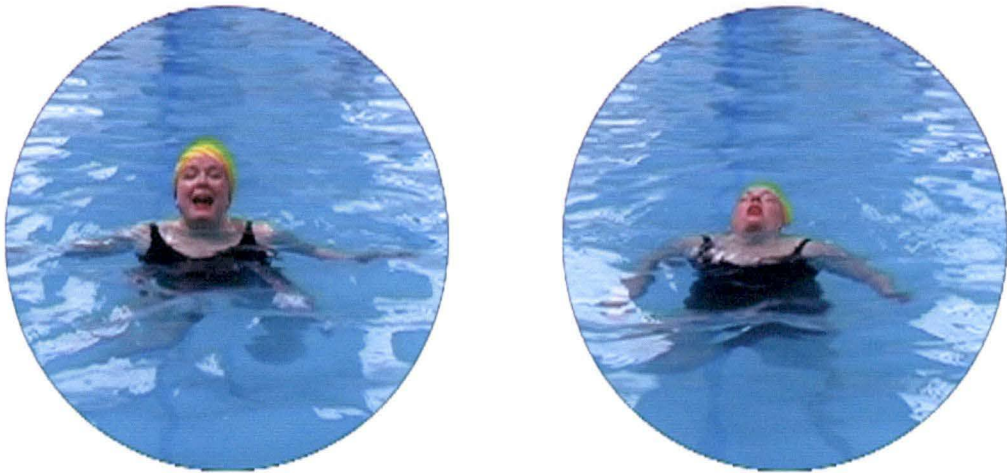


Figure 28. Stills from *Paranoid* (2002)

Presented using the audio from the in-camera recording, this work was marred by safety concerns over both electrical equipment (in combination with the water) and my own wellbeing. Despite these issues, it was through the creation of this work that I became more proficient with the shaped projections I was to use later in works such as *TIT* and *POP*. I found that while shaping the video with black masking around the image is an efficient base, within the video format the colour black still exists as a light source. This style of work requires further, physical masking at the source of the projected light beam in the gallery space – masking of the projector's lens.³⁹

³⁹ See *Appendix 1: The process for fitting a projection to a custom surface* (p. 82) for this technique.

Stage 2 - Physical Experimentation

Mundy Park

Mundy Park was conceived and shot in Canada in 2000 but was never completed. As I sat in a Canadian forest accompanied by birdsong, I shot two video sequences, one of each of my own eyes. Because the sequences were not shot simultaneously, there is visible visual discomfort in their mismatched movements.



Figure 29. *Mundy Park* (2000 - 03). Installation view

These two sequences were installed separately on two monitors situated on the floor of Hobart's Carnegie Gallery as part of the exhibition, *Intravenous II*.⁴⁰ Placed side-by-side, they mimicked the eye's natural position, and constituted another experiment in presentation formatting. Watching the eyes slip in and out of sync with one another is a simple, engaging and meditative process.

⁴⁰ *Intravenous II*, Carnegie Gallery, Hobart. April 24 – June 1, 2003. Works by Shelley Chick, Kathryn Faludi, Anna Phillips and Sally Rees. Works shown: *Mundy Park* (2000-03) and *The Groove* (2003)

While I did not employ this dual monitor format in the research project again, I did re-use these parallel visions of slipped time in the work *Encore* (2004 –05).

POP

During 2003, Matt Warren and I were invited by IHOS Opera to develop a work for their feeder program, the IHOS Music Theatre Laboratory.⁴¹ The resulting work, *POP*, combined my conceptual interest in pop music and performance with supplementary experiments in projection formatting. These experiments featured as part of the overall theatrical art design of the work. Warren and I developed *POP* through a series of workshops with a cast of six teenage boys. The collaboration resulted in a theatrical work that was twenty minutes long. It was an opportunity to examine some conceptual concerns outside my own experience. We employed vox pop excerpts and material drawn from the workshops, along with a series of simple performance experiments: ‘Hold a note as long as you can. When your breath expires, drop your head’. The work developed into a series of fluid, abstracted vignettes that embraced and built on the teenage status of the cast members, referencing their investment in pop music and reflecting its inherent structures.

Within *POP*’s simple set of six lidded school desks, backed by a small square screen, the cast played out percussive passages. They stirred amplified coffee cups and slammed their desks while animated footage of each performer, accompanied by snippets of their vox pop interviews, was projected across the upraised desk lids. Video and animations were variously custom-fitted to project onto the desks lids and the screen.⁴² The cast sang a cacophonous chorus composed of layered lyric lines taken from their favourite songs (e.g.

⁴¹ IHOS Opera is a music theatre company based in Hobart that primarily performs the works of composer and artistic director, Constantine Koukias.

⁴² See *Appendix 1 : The process for fitting a projection to a custom surface* (p. 82) for a description of this technique.

‘not a trace of doubt in my mind’ taken from the Bare Naked Ladies’ version of Neil Diamonds *I’m a Believer*, or ‘Hey Sexy Lady, I like your flow’ from Shaggy’s *Hey Sexy Lady*). Downstage, on their knees, the cast filled the time-span of the archetypal ‘perfect’ pop song (three minutes and twenty six seconds) with a chant of ‘verse’ and ‘chorus’ to a slow record-scratch heartbeat as the time counted down on a projected clock behind.



Figure 30. Stills from video documentation of *POP* (2003)

The work ended as one by one each cast member sang the line, ‘In my head this song goes on forever’, recording themselves onto a looped cassette in a yellow cassette player suspended from a rope. Winding the cassette player as high as they could reach, they then pressed play, let go, and ran leaving the remnant of their voices, spinning and spot-lit above the darkened stage.

TIT

Produced for the exhibition *Bodybag: Somewhere over the rainbow*,⁴³ *TIT* left music behind for a moment, while I focused on the corporeal theme of the exhibition. A five-minute, silent, looped projection sequence of one of my breasts was cropped and fitted to a custom-made, domed Perspex screen (approximately six times actual breast size) in the manner of *POP*'s animated sequences. Disembodied, this enormous breast was not immediately identifiable, and indeed seemed somewhat alien. Ideally installed slightly off centre, it appears like a moon or a one eyed face, yet it also references its absent twin on the basis of the vacant space beside it. This work involved my first customised screen, a configuration that was installed at the Academy Gallery, Launceston (2003) and the Carnegie Gallery in Hobart (2004).

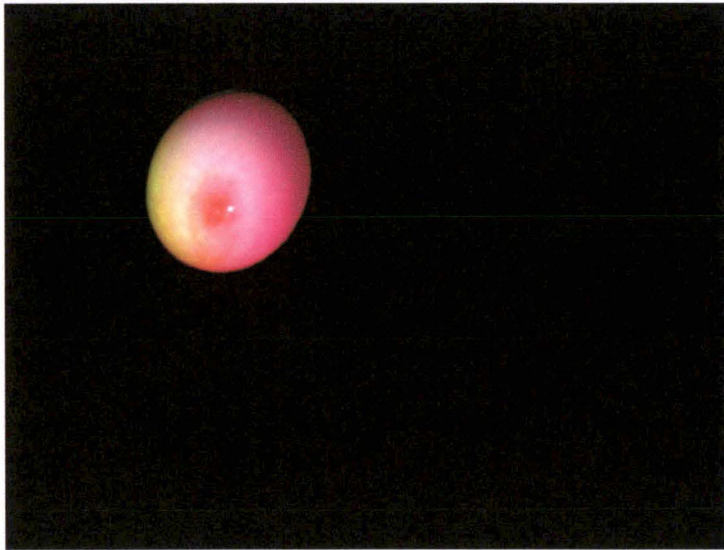


Figure 31. *TIT* (2003). Installation view

⁴³ *Bodybag: Somewhere over the rainbow*. An exhibition of artworks by the artists working in the Hobart Letitia Street Studio. Curated by Malcom Bywaters. Academy Gallery, Launceston. 28 July – 22 August, 2003. Carnegie Gallery, Hobart. March 18 – April 8, 2004. Work shown: *TIT* (2003)

Custom screens require either specific adherence to recommended projection distance and projection angle guidelines,⁴⁴ or *in situ* fitting, using the portability of a laptop computer to resize and shape the video image once projector and screen are installed on site. At the Carnegie Gallery, limited space meant the lack of a suitable projection point for *TIT*, and the projector was installed too far to the left of the screen. This meant that even with the creation of new projected image configurations specifically for the gallery, when the projected light fell on the curved surface of the Perspex screen, the right side of the screen remained in shadow (i.e. without image). As one viewer remarked, it became ‘the dark side of the moon’.

Intermission

The most technically complex work attempted throughout this project, *Intermission*, which resulted from a particular projection idea: to present a free-hanging custom screen with images projected upon it from both sides. The screen was sufficiently opaque to hold an image, yet transparent enough to allow both images to be seen simultaneously. With the projectors placed low (at body height) viewers had the potential to interrupt one of the projector beams, thereby disrupting or erasing one image.

I consider myself fortunate to have my oldest friend still in my life and this twenty-year relationship is bound up in the music we love and share. I felt that a double projection technique would be ideal to explore our combined

⁴⁴ Works custom-fitted to such a screen require an exact replication of the conditions of the fitting when installed. The angle, the distance between projection source and surface and any variation will bleed the image outside the desired surface, which can destroy the illusion. See *Appendix 1 : The process for fitting a projection to a custom surface*, (p. 82) for an overview of this technique.

experience. *Intermission* featured footage of each of us taken from either side of the same window.⁴⁵



Figure 32. *Intermission* (2003)

I wanted to revisit my experimentation into altered video and sound speeds that I had begun in *The Groove*.⁴⁶ As *Intermission* required precise positioning of bodies in surprisingly uncomfortable positions, I decided that this footage would be best slowed to provide more footage to work with, resulting from a shorter shoot time. By slowing the material down, I could get a long section of material (twenty minutes) from a brief section of source material (ten minutes).

⁴⁵ The work was also shot with us both in position at the same time, and from either side of the glass to give more options for the final piece. The screen had not yet been made and so the technique had yet to be tested. As this work was destined for a particular exhibition I wanted as many options available to me should my idea fail.

⁴⁶ Refer to Chapter 3, *Stage 3 – Refining Content and Selection of Works* (p. 65).

Both of us wore headphones to access a base track that would accompany our singing, in the manner of a click track,⁴⁷ and ensure the synchronisation of our voices. The track, Blondie's *In the Flesh*, a song that we had both adored as adolescents, was sped up to twice its usual speed. With this speed change, pitch is also affected (in the case of material being faster, the pitch is raised. Slower: the pitch is lowered). To sing along to the sped-up track, therefore, required the adoption of the 'chipmunk' style of vocals. When the video was slowed down in post-production, the footage (theoretically) would then play at the original rate of the source song. To shoot the work, we took our positions on each side of the window, and, standing very still, established a constant eye line and point of focus with each other. One of us then moved out of shot, while the other maintained the position for their performance. We held the position for ten minutes, at which point the song began in our headphones and we performed it (in high squeaky voices) to its end. In post-production, the video footage taken of each performance had to be edited alongside each other to ensure identical length and synchronisation. In the gallery, the videos were played on two identical format DVD players to best approximate this synchronisation.

The inclusion of *Intermission* in the exhibition *SCAPE*⁴⁸ provided me with an opportunity to test the presentation of the work in an open gallery alongside other artists. The lighting requirements of most group exhibitions mean that video-based work is often enclosed and/or separated from the rest of the exhibition. The objective was to protect it from the spilled lighting set up for fixed image or object works, and to prevent the video work from interfering with the presentation of other works. This deliberate isolation has appeared to me to be at odds with the curatorial exercise of bringing together a combination

⁴⁷ The click track originated in early sound movies, where marks were made on the film itself to indicate exact timings for musicians to synchronise their recordings to the moving image. It is often thought of as a recording of a metronome because it serves a similar purpose. Click tracks remain in consistent use as a synchronisation tool in standard recording technology.

⁴⁸ *SCAPE*. Curated by Celia Lendis. CAST Gallery, Hobart. November 2003. Work shown: *Intermission* (2003)

of works. In this instance however, the curator allowed me to work within the open gallery space and the other works were lit in an entirely sympathetic manner. The result was as I had hoped. The work was entirely approachable as the two female figures within the work gazed into each other's eyes and burst into slow motion song at twenty-minute intervals. The work was shown at just over life size and, as the viewer interrupted the beam, they effectively erased and replaced either one or other of the women with their own body.

Reflecting on this work, I felt that while it seemed to be formally resolved and visually engaging,⁴⁹ it ultimately failed to successfully integrate content and form. The sophisticated presentation seemed to have no correlation with my examination of this particular personal relationship. The circular screen's 'upside-down lollipop' form (chosen for its opposition of the standard rectangular video format and for its ability to be hung, rigidly, from a single point) seemed have little convincing reference to the relationship I was exploring. I was also disappointed that this content, our friendship, was too specific to truly represent a 'collective' experience.

Cartography of the Headbang: Sally and Susie



Figure 33. Stills from source video for *Cartography of the Headbang: Sally and Susie* (2004)

⁴⁹ There was one technical hitch to *Intermission*. It seems that utilizing identical DVD players is no assurance of synchronisation. A locally hard-to-find and extremely expensive piece of equipment is required. In this case the problem was solved by invigilation instruction to occasionally check the work, and if no audience present, to stop and re-start the work.

A last experiment with format was produced for the exhibition *(In)Stalls* (2004) at the Long Gallery, Hobart⁵⁰. Titled *Cartography of the Headbang: Sally and Susie*, the work was sourced from video material shot at a dinner party when a friend and I had ended the meal with a game of cards accompanied by old Guns n' Roses records.

This induced a spontaneous round table outburst of joyous head banging which, after being documented, was projected onto a wall in the Long Gallery and traced with charcoal, both while running and in still frame. The resulting drawing mapped the movement of this animated engagement with a particular style of music.



Figure 34. *Cartography of the Headbang: Sally and Susie* (2004)

⁵⁰ *(In)Stalls*, Curated by Mish Meijers and Tricky Walsh. Long Gallery, Hobart. 29 August – 28 September 2004. Work Shown: *Cartography of the Headbang: Sally & Susie*

This work was a joy to produce from start to finish and I plan to execute more of these drawn 'video-transcriptions' in the future. I made the decision to omit it from the final submission on the grounds that, while more successful than some of the projection/screen experiments, it complicated the parameters of the project by stepping too far away from performance and into more strict documentation. I also was concerned that it would disrupt the pattern of the thesis exhibition.

Stage 3 - Refining Content and Selection of Works

The Groove

Entering the last twelve months of my research, I began to yearn for the simplicity of an earlier work, *The Groove* (2003) that I had shown in *Intravenous II*.⁵¹

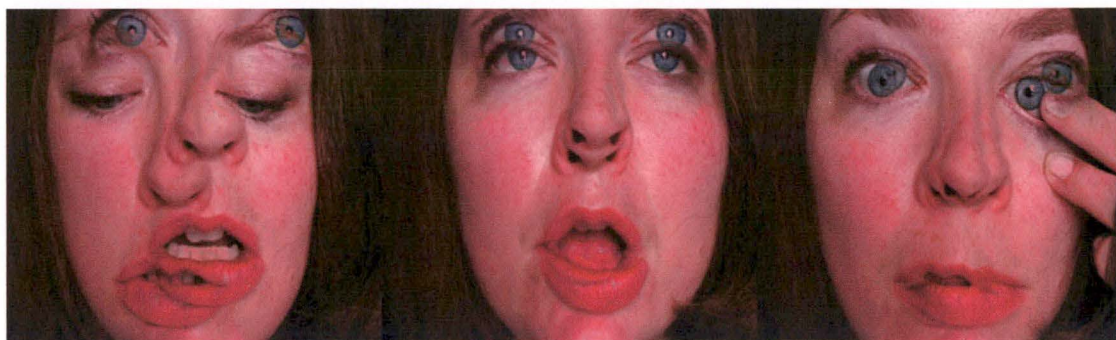


Figure 35. Stills from *The Groove* (2003)

The Groove had been intended as a feel-good work in response to my belief that the early works in this project were overly melancholic. Inspired by time spent working behind the bar at a local gay nightclub, I attempted to produce effervescence through speeding up the video. This first speed experiment later led to the development of *Intermission*. In this instance I performed the reverse: slowing Madonna's *Get into the groove* to half speed. I performed it by mimicking the low, slow resulting vocal effect; the idea being that when the video was sped up, the voice would sound close to normal. It is evident when viewing this work this is certainly not the case. The voice is obviously sped up: it is silly and squeaky. The other obvious feature of this work is the doubled face. Mimicking the double tracking of Madonna's voice on the original recording, I overlaid the audio and video of two of these performances.

⁵¹ *Intravenous II*, Carnegie Gallery, Hobart. April 24 – June 1, 2003. Works by Shelley Chick, Kathryn Faludi, Anna Phillips and Sally Rees. Works shown: *Mundy Park* (2000-03) and *The Groove* (2003)

One outcome was the highlighting of subtle differences in phrasing and action: one visage neglects to utter a particular ‘Ooh Yeah’ while the other remembers to do so; one marks time in nods, counting itself in to the next phrase, while the other confidently begins after a little self-conscious hair adjustment. The faces, teasingly, never quite slip into alignment.

I experienced problems with a contact lens while shooting, and I chose to use the two takes where this was most prominent. Not only is there additional visual interest in the repeated action of the lens’s adjustment, but this small and repeated act provides a visual distraction during a musical break of the song which, when performed unaccompanied, functions purely as silence.

This work was immensely irritating to many viewers and moving to others; in general, readings of the work varied widely. In the catalogue essay for *Intravenus II*, Celia Lendis writes that *The Groove* ‘trembles with the nervousness of adolescence’. Indeed, the experience was often contextualised by members of the audience as being reminiscent of staring self-critically into a mirror as an unsure teenager. Lendis continues:

Rees’ performance is like a mantra, undertaken as an aid to experiencing a deeper kind of knowing and recalling the particular affect of a personal memory.⁵²

In this passage the writer has identified my ultimate hope for these works, and later I came to adopt this particular work as a preferred model for developing the subsequent works that constitute my thesis exhibition.

⁵² Lendis C., *Intravenus II*, exhibition catalogue (2003). Self-published by the artists, p. 1.

Mustang Sally

Mustang Sally (2004), the second work in the thesis exhibition, was devised as a form of personal exorcism. Interested in ways of broadening the scope of emotional content in the works, I decided to explore an adopted autobiographical song that I did not regard as fondly as others I have chosen to perform. When a well known-song bears your name it intrudes, uninvited, repeatedly on your life. I find most women who share this connection are at some time tortured by a namesake song, and there are so many songs containing the names of women. Used almost as a form of harassment, a woman named Susie will be confronted by a knowing leer accompanied by a burst of *If you new Susie like I know Susie, Oh, Oh, Oh what a girl*. Similarly, women bearing the name Caroline must currently suffer at the indignity of OutKast's recent hit song *Roses*:

Caroline! She's the reason for the word 'witch'.⁵³

How do you solve a problem like Maria? Oh Maggie, I wish I'd never seen your face. Help me, Rhonda! A whole lotta woman, a whole lotta Rosie. I could continue but, to return to the point, *Mustang Sally* is my particular cross to bear.

In producing this work I wanted to develop a performance without singing. When I lived in Vancouver I had entertained the fanciful idea of obtaining and wearing a horse-head and presenting myself as a mascot at a local steak house named after the song. I revived this thought with the idea of dancing to the

⁵³ Andre 3000, *Roses*. From the double album, *Speakerboxxx/The Love Below*, OutKast (2003), La Face records (U.S).

song instead, expelling my frustration with its existence through physical effort. As John Lydon sang with his band Public Image Limited, *anger is an energy*.⁵⁴

Concerned about the copyright issue of incorporating original tracks in the works, I downloaded a midi-file version of the song and, using Quicktime, re-orchestrated it using a more absurd organ sound for the melody. Keen on continuing experiments in speed, this track was both slowed down and sped up, and I danced in my backyard in front of the camera to both tracks repeatedly for as long as I was able. Two hour-long tapes were filled with this material.



Figure 36. Stills from *Mustang Sally* (2004)

I spent longer in postproduction on this work than on any other throughout the research. Deciding what to make of the recorded footage was a lengthy

⁵⁴ John Lydon/Bill Laswell, *Rise*. From the album *Compact Disc*, Public Image Limited (1986) Elektra Records (U.S.).

process. While I liked the idea of showing the footage in its entirety, the physical data constraints of producing a DVD for exhibition purposes⁵⁵ meant this was not possible.

Continuing with the idea of the exorcism, I elected to represent myself in the hybrid horse-human role as a clutch of translucent ghosts that fade in and out of the video picture plane. Closer to an installation work than other works, the final duration of *Mustang Sally*, at around ten minutes, seemed a compromise between being long enough to allow the viewer to realise that little else would occur, freeing them to move on to another work,⁵⁶ and a realistic time frame for another viewer to view the work in its entirety.

The audio component adds to an otherworldly atmosphere by using a base-track of night sounds, mixed with my original midi-file organ remix, faint and affected by digital reverb. It is distant, but the song is unending, churning underneath until it strengthens and becomes more present (or aurally opaque) with the appearance of each dancing figure, only to fade away again, as each figure does. Each moment that the track reappears, it is connected by its level of 'presence'⁵⁷ to the appearing figure's proximity to the camera. The sound is brighter and clearer when the figure is in the foreground, while more subdued when it is further back; but it is never as buried as the base track. The work was shot in night-vision mode,⁵⁸ giving it a look of surveillance footage that seemed to suit my uncomfortable associations with the song, and also hinting at the supernatural, through its resemblance to amateur poltergeist and UFO footage. While I have generally avoided voyeurism within this project and am aware of

⁵⁵ DVD-R format can only hold an hour of high quality video material.

⁵⁶ I wrote earlier in this paper about my base urge to simply create compelling images. It was my intention that *Mustang Sally* would be able to work in a gallery as simply as a framed landscape painting. One can immerse oneself, or look and then move on. The duration of this work is, to some extent, irrelevant as long as it is continual and always present.

⁵⁷ *Presence* is a descriptive audio term that refers to the three dimensional, illusionary space that sound creates and to a sound's position within that space.

⁵⁸ Night-vision mode is a green tinged setting that is a feature on many video cameras and uses infra-red light to enable the cameras iris to 'see in the dark'.

its unavoidable association with night-vision technologies, various strategies were employed to counter this. The decision to project this work large-scale gives it a *trompe l'oeil* effect and extends the projection to the edge of the field of vision. This produces, for the viewer, an impression of gazing into a night-time space, which is interrupted intermittently by appearances of the 'pony-ghosts'. The viewer is included within this faux-space, lessening the voyeuristic implications through their inclusion within the space of the work itself.

While it is possible for other works in the final exhibition to be shown on monitors, this work is specifically designed for projection. As the base image consists of a void, the video is also convenient for looping between a clean image ending and a similar restart.

Mustang Sally is an unsettling work that retains a touch of silliness, but ultimately remains discomfiting and in possession of an indefinable quality. To the unsuspecting viewer, the mystery of the work's existence and the struggle to define what exactly they are looking at, combine with the work's presentation format to produce and maintain the unsettling nature of the work.

Encore

In the latter half of 2004 I suspended my candidature to undertake a residency at the Rosamund McCulloch Studio, Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris. The four-month residency was intense and fruitful, but was also marred by a heavy depression born in part from my inability to communicate in another language. Bizet's opera, *The Pearl Fishers* was presented to me as a CD as a bon voyage gift, and this period was characterised by frequently playing it, and also marked by consistent bouts of heavy drinking.

I had long been considering the idea of using a drunken sing-a-long within my research and, one rainy Paris afternoon, I decided to conduct the experiment that became *Encore* on video. The phenomena of mood transgression through music is heightened by drunkenness and I decided to document this process by performing repeated versions of my favourite passage from *The Pearl Fishers*, *Je crois entendre encore*, while downing a series of vodka martinis. After shooting two and a half hours of material and having ingested about nine drinks on an empty stomach, I threw up and passed out.

Feeling rather foolish after this exercise, I did not review this material until four months later - safe, well, and back at home. While viewing the footage from this period was difficult, two particular points seemed pertinent: I saw myself struggle to remember and pronounce the libretto in the French language which I had so battled with, and I was also struck by the high drama of the drunken content, which so matched the high drama of opera. I held some concern that Bizet's opera sat outside my self-imposed popular music parameters, but an assessment of the location where the work was made and an acknowledgement of the piece's status as 'muzak'⁵⁹ in Parisian shopping centres, gardens and streets, led me to dispel this concern.

Encore uses the split screen format to play the first sober take against a later drunken one. This format is traditionally used in time-based media to show two different locations at the same time, e.g. two participants engaged in a telephone conversation. In this instance, the split-screen places the same location and incident (the singing), separated by time and inebriation, beside each other like a constructed parallel universe.

⁵⁹ The piped, ambient 'nothing' music used in public spaces.



Figure 37. Still from *Encore* (2005)

The sober singer is quiet and unsure of the lyrics, while maintaining a professional awareness of the camera and framing, while the drunken singer enthusiastically sweeps vocally through the phrases in poor, phonetic French and at other times simply mumbles while focusing on the temporarily more important task of lighting a cigarette; or she sways, swinging the never-ending martini glass in and out of view. The video is heightened in colour and contrast to accentuate its depicted drama, creating the antithesis of gritty realism.

The performance audio is subdued and saturated in reverb, underneath the original listening source, mimicking the total experience that the work replicates. In the drunken, solitary state this work attempts to replicate, a singular voice (my own) joins the original track almost involuntarily and becomes but a faint adjunct to the audio that runs inside my head. This is the sole occasion where I have incorporated the source track in the final work in its

original form. This was included both because of its contextual importance and also due to the absence of moral copyright issues.

While the work does not obliquely reveal the process of its making through its title or content, there are obvious clues: the presence of the cocktail glass and the demeanour of the second singer. The work is shown in claustrophobically limited space. I initially imagined this work would be experienced through headphones, but their awkwardness as gallery display technology led me to use speakers, placed at ear height on the direct left and right of the viewer, to coax them inside the head of the drunken chanteuse.

The Last Farewell

The final work in this submission exhibition revisits the collective music experience I attempted to represent in *Intermission*. Using Roger Whittaker's song (quoted as the title)⁶⁰, this work is inspired by the warmth of a sports crowd singing in unison. The example of the genre that I find most moving is the roar of Liverpool Football Club fans performing their adopted theme song *You'll never walk alone*. As well as the warmth implicit in the activity, I wanted to use *The Last Farewell* in particular for its rousing chorus:

*...for you are beautiful
and I have loved you dearly
more dearly than the spoken word can tell.*

Shot in widescreen format, the image wraps around the viewer in the gallery, enveloping them in the gaze of a cheerful crowd (who stare directly at the camera lens) as well as in the passionate sentiment that effectively becomes a tribute to all who view it. It is a work designed to make the viewer feel loved.

⁶⁰ Roger Whittaker and R.A. Webster, *The Last Farewell*. Single released by Roger Whittaker (1975). RCA Records (US)

An invitation to participate in this performance was sent out either as a CD and lyric sheet or as an email with attached karaoke file,⁶¹ so that people could familiarise themselves with the song before the night. The shoot was preceded by a small gathering (saveloys and beer provided) in one of the grandstands adjacent to the location – the North Hobart Football Oval. These provisions helped to cultivate the necessary affable mood amongst participants. *The Last Farewell* was routinely played amongst other music throughout this reception to further familiarise the crowd with the track. Using the venue's night-game lighting system, the work was shot using cue cards situated behind the camera to prompt the participants in their rousing rendition. Some participants obstinately clung to their lyric sheets.

In the interests of caution, I shot this work with myself in the midst of the group and absent from it. It occurred to me that in earlier works I had presented myself as a kind of 'everyman', albeit with certain personal references. If the identity that featured in the preceding videos suddenly appeared amongst the group, I was concerned that this identity would suddenly become more precise: a recognisable face in the crowd. I do appear in the final work and, happily, manage to become 'just one of the crowd' after all.

In undertaking this shoot, much larger than I was used to, I enlisted a small crew. An audio technician, choirmaster and general assistant were present to enable me to concentrate on crowd management, camera and my own performance. In retrospect, I regret not also relinquishing control to a dedicated camera-person, as both the framing and focus of the shots were compromised by my lack of total attention. My 'day-after' distress at the quality of the

⁶¹ A form of Quicktime file in which an audio midi file is accompanied by a stream of accompanying lyrics indicating the point where one should be singing by a change in colour to the text. This directly mimics the video form used in Karaoke bars to prompt the participant.

footage was the result of a project considerably expensive in money, time and planning. My negativity faded with sleep, transforming into a determination to make it work.



Figure 38. Stills from *The Last Farewell* (2005)

The primary problem with the resultant footage was poor focus and framing. In the interest of a clean loop, I began each take with an empty frame and asked my ‘choir’ to enter from each side and begin to sing when clumped in the centre. While I framed and focused on the group in a test positioning, with such a large group of people (around forty: some drunk) it was impossible without loud verbal direction and physical shuffling to get them to return to the exact same spot where the shot had been set up.

With some digital adjustment, the framing was corrected quite simply, albeit with the loss of a couple of figures from shot. My strategy for dealing with the focus was more complex. I decided to use the lack of focus as a feature of the work, and proceeded to digitally pull the focus further outward in time with the choir’s dissipation and departure from the correct lyrics, tune and each other’s

voices. As a result, the shot pulls into its closest focus at the end of each verse and, more consistently, as they confidently burst into the stirring chorus with which all had now become easily familiar. The focus slippage gives the work a pleasantly woozy atmosphere, and more successfully replicates the experience of drinking and singing with a cheerful crowd on an icy autumn evening than my original, simpler plan for the work would have done.

Conclusion

The *Karaoke* research began with the aim of re-establishing a trust between artist and audience. The objective was to find a means to step away from the occasional reputation of the contemporary artist as charlatan and trickster and, instead, to engage with the viewer on a very intimate and genuine level.

This goal was pursued through the ubiquitous medium of popular music in combination with the authenticity of sharing my own experiences of this form through the work. Moving through intensive experimentation with the video display format, the project was eventually resolved through the content alone, reverting to the simplicity of single channel video. Integral to the resolution of the project was the abstraction of the performances into less didactic forms.

The resulting thesis exhibition contains four works that explore four facets of the experience of the popular music audience:

- *Mustang Sally*: a performative exorcism of a more unpleasant outcome of the ubiquity of popular music;
- *The Groove*: a participatory engagement in the experience of popular music;
- *Encore*: an exploration of intense emotional investment;
- *The Last Farewell*: a study of collective experience.

Through stages of producing this body of work, new presentation techniques were developed that are manifest in the supporting works. These were useful experiments in their own right, but ultimately did not serve the primary research objective of this project. They will be extended and utilised in future studio research. Developments in the technical aspects of projection, and in the design and implementation of custom projection surfaces, continue to be of interest to

me, but will be best served by a purely visual investigation as opposed to one driven by more conceptual concerns.

Through research undertaken in a number of works, I concluded that any formal technical tricks distanced the viewer from the 'guts' of the works and operated in opposition to my intentions for the works in this project. In the later stages of the project, this led to a revival of the single-channel video as an artwork in its own right, as opposed to its common use as pure record, as component of a larger installation, or as a narrative, plot-driven device. It is this format's obstinately simple presence, within the current climate of interactive/ installation/ multimedia complexity, which ultimately provided me with the most satisfaction. In addition, the single channel video format proved to be the most effective means of making the connection I was compelled to find; a connection between the maker and the viewer wrought from a shared contemporary human experience.

Bibliography

Arn, Robert, 'The Form and Sense of Video'. PDF document (183 –190.pdf) accessed at *The Form and Sense of Video*, March 7 2005.

http://www.vasulka.org/Kitchen/PDF_Eigenwelt/pdf/183-190.pdf. 1973

Bligh, Duncan, 'Sally Rees: A Loft', *Artlink*, Volume 22, No. 1, 2002

Des Barres, Pamela, and Paul Kemprecos, *Rock Bottom: Dark Moments in Music Babylon*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996

Elkins, James, *Pictures of the Body: Pain and Metamorphosis*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999

Frith, Simon, *Facing the Music: Essays on Pop, Rock and Culture*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1988

Goldberg, RoseLee, *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present*, London: Thames and Hudson, 2001

Golonu, Berin (ed), *Erwin Wurm. I love my time I don't like my time*, edited by Berin Golonu with essays by Geraldine Barlow, René de Guzman and Ralph Rugoff; exhibition curated by René de Guzman. San Francisco : Yerba Buena Center for the Arts; Ostfildern-Ruit : Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2004

Grossberg, Lawrence, *Dancing in Spite of Myself: Essays on Popular Culture*, Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1997

Grosz, Elizabeth A. (ed), *Becomings: Explorations in Time, Memory and Futures*, Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press. 1999

Harrison, Ian, 'The naked tape', *Mojo* magazine, issue 103, June 2002, 2002, p. 26

Hornby, Nick, *31 Songs*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2003

Jancik W. and T. Lathrop, *Cult Rockers: 150 of the Most Controversial, Distinctive, Offbeat, Intriguing, Outrageous and Championed Rock Musicians of All Time*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995

Kent, Nick, *The Dark Stuff: Selected Writings on Rock Music 1972-93*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994

Lai, Yi, *Close-up: Contemporary Art from Taiwan* online catalogue (Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Canada) http://aggv.bc.ca/taiwan/yuan_goang-ming.htm Accessed April 14, 2005.

Lendis, Celia. *Intravenus II*, exhibition catalogue, self-published by the artists. 2003

Lippard Lucy. R., *Six Years: The Dematerialization Of The Art Object From 1966 to 1972*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973

Mitchell, William .J., *E-topia: Urban Life, Jim – But Not As We Know It*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT, 1999

Morley, Paul, *Words and Music: A History Of Pop In The Shape Of A City*, London: Bloomsbury, 2003

Rittaud-Hutinet, Jacques, *Auguste and Lois Lumière Letters: Inventing the Cinema*, London: Faber and Faber, 1995

Schwabsky, Barry, 'The Voice Estranged', in *Gillian Wearing: Mass Observation*, exhibition catalogue, Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2002

Smith, Giles, *Lost in Music: A Pop Odyssey*. London: Picador 1995

Spence, Brad, *Bas Jan Ader*, Irvine: Fine Arts Gallery, University of California, 1999

Toop, David, *Ocean of Sound*, London: Serpent's Tail, 1995

Thompson, Ben, *Ways of Hearing: A User's Guide to the Pop Psyche, from Elvis to Eminem*, London: Orion, 2001

Troy, Maria, *I Say I Am: Women's Performance Video from the 1970s*, PDF document (isayiam-1.pdf) accessed at <http://www.vdb.org> March 13 2005. Path: Video Data Bank/Anthologies/I Say I Am/I Say I Am essay. 2002

Appendices

Appendix 1: The process for fitting a projection to a custom surface.

This process uses the Final Cut Pro (FCP) software package to shape a digital video source to fit a desired surface or screen. It is a late-stage procedure, to be undertaken when the video has already been treated with any other necessary post-production techniques.

Before fitting, both screen/surface and projector must be located and installed in the exact position where they will remain. If they are moved after fitting, they will no longer comply correctly with the projection. Strict guidelines of distance and angle between projector and surface can be ascertained and recorded for reference and re-installation at this stage of the process, but wherever possible, it is preferable for all components to remain in place.

With the video captured or imported into FCP, an intermediary device (usually a DV camera) is required between computer and projector to display the video material as it will be seen in output.

A black mask can be used to acquire the basic necessary shape of the projection if not a hard-edged rectangular format akin to video's inherent form eg. a circle. This sequence must then be rendered and output as an independent video source and re-imported for further shaping.

In this form in FCP and using the motion tab, the image can be rescaled, distorted and cropped to fit the screen/surface closely. It must be noted that extreme variations in scale may lead to some degradation of the image.

When fitted the video is ready to be rendered and exported to its final format (Quicktime, DVD, DV Tape.)

When this final version of the video is connected directly to the projector, it can be observed that the video black that will surround the image is still evidentially a source of light that interferes with clean installation. This problem must be overcome with masking.

Using cardboard or tape at the lens of the projector, masking of a hard-edged image is simply achieved but any masking will create a softened edge to the projection. I prefer this, as it blends the projection into its surroundings, but if a hard edge is desired, it may be preferable to forgo masking altogether, and simply play with darkening the projection using the projectors inbuilt settings. To mask a rounder shaped projection, I have used a piece of card with a hole punched through with a nail. This hole can be surprisingly small and by wiggling the nail *in situ*, a more irregular shape can be masked. Irregular, rounded shapes will always be a process of trial and error to mask efficiently, but, as with most processes, it becomes easier the more often it is undertaken.

Appendix 2: List of works completed through the research.

Singing a sad song into the wind at the edge of the world 2002

Single channel video. 2' 51".

Mundy Park 2000 – 2002

Dual channel video on monitors. Dimensions Variable.

Paranoid 2002

Single channel video. 3' 27".

The Groove 2003

Single channel video. 4' 4".

POP 2003

Performance work. Devised and Directed by Matt Warren and Sally Rees.

Performers: Patrick Barker, Damian Byrne, Pip Hunn, Jon Lenthall and Cameron Marchall. Produced by IHOS Experimental Music Theatre Laboratory. Peacock Theatre, Hobart, November 2003.

TIT 2003

Video projection on Perspex screen. 80 x 80 cm.

Intermission 2003

Dual projection on Perspex screen. 200 x 200 cm. 23' 7".

Mustang Sally 2004

Single channel video for projection. 9'

Cartography of the headbang: Sally and Susie 2004

Video frames transcribed in charcoal on wall. Dimensions variable.

Encore 2004/05

Single channel video. 3' 16".

The Last Farewell 2005

Single channel widescreen video for projection. 4' 52".

Choir: Julian Barraclough, Joseph Barrows, Lucy Bleach, Jane Busby, Brian Coates, Monica Coates, Jack Daniels, Amanda Davies, Susie Findlay, Joybelle Frasson, Neil Haddon, Andrew Harper, Bill Hart, Derek Hart, Morgan Hart, Maria Kunda, Colin Langridge, Fiona Lee, John Lendis, Celia Lendis, Dale Lewis, Verena Oeltjen, Rod Payne, Suan Payne, Daniel Petrov, Emidio Puglielli, Lucienne Rickard, Caz Rodwell, Neil Rowe, Richard Skinner, Mary Scott, Tristan Stowards, Bec Tudor, Lucia Usmiani, Chris Usmiani, Annabel Watkins, Billie Watkins, June Watkins, Philip Watkins, Dean Vaughn Williams and Alan Young.

Appendix 3: Filmography

High Fidelity (2000). Directed by Stephen Frears.

Screenplay by Nick Hornby, Steve Pink, John Cusack and D.V. De Vincentis
(Touchstone Pictures.)

Crazy (1999). Directed by Heddy Honigmann.

(Pieter van Huystee Film & TV.)

Picnic at Hanging Rock (1979). Directed by Peter Weir.

(McElroy and McElroy Productions)

Appendix 4: Discography

Andre 3000, *Roses*.

From the double album, *Speakerboxxx/The Love Below*, OutKast (2003)

La Face records (U.S.).

Bryan Adams, *The Summer of '69'*

From the album *Reckless*, Bryan Adams (1984)

A & M Records (U.S.).

Glenn Danzig, *Last Caress*.

From the EP *Beware*, The Misfits (1980)

Cherry Red Records (U.K.).

John Lydon/Bill Laswell, *Rise*.

From the album *Compact Disc*, Public Image Limited (1986)

Elektra Records (U.S.).

Nile Rodgers/Bernard Edwards, *We are family*.

Single released by Sister Sledge (1979)

Cotillion/Atlantic Records (U.S.).

Roger Whittaker and R.A. Webster, *The Last Farewell*.

Single released by Roger Whittaker (1975).

RCA Records (US)

Appendix 5: List of illustrations

Figure 1: Page 10.

Two monitors demonstrate how Britney Spears is both catalyst for finding the inner child and portal to carnal self-gratification (2001).

Installation view.

Dual channel video on monitors. Dimensions variable. Artist's own image.

Figure 2: Page 11.

Stills from Spots before my eyes (and a sound of distant crying) (2001).

Video for projection. 8' 39"

Figure 3: Page 12.

Still from *With apologies* (2001).

Still from single channel video for monitor. 2' 10"

Figure 4: Page 13.

Image from *A Loft* (2001).

Inkjet print on banner canvas. 150 x 80 cm.

Figure 5: Page 18.

Yuan Goang-Ming

Fish on a dish (1992).

Video projection on ceramic plate. 100 x 100 cm.

Image source: Graduate School of Art and Technology, Centre for Arts and Technology, Taipei National University of the Arts website.

<http://techart.tnua.edu.tw/~gmyuan/data/fish.htm> April 14, 2005

Figure 6: Page 20.

Tony Oursler

Smirk (2003).

Video projection on fibreglass form. 100 x 90 x 40 cm.

Image source Gallery Paule Anglim website.

<http://www.gallerypaulanglim.com/oursler.html> April 14, 2005

Figure 7: Page 23.

John Cusack as Rob Gordon in *High Fidelity* (2000). Directed by Stephen Frears.

Screenplay by Nick Hornby, Steve Pink, John Cusack and D.V. De Vincentis

Touchstone Pictures.

Figure 8: Page 26.

Stills from *Crazy* (1999). Directed by Heddy Honigmann.

(Pieter van Huystee Film & TV.)

Figure 9: Page 34.

Bas Jan Ader

I'm too sad to tell you (1970).

B/W photograph. 49 x 59 cm

Image source: Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen (Rotterdam) Website.

<http://boijmans.medialab.nl/onderw/thema/emoties/emo8b.htm> March 17, 2004

Figure 10: Page 36.

Bas Jan Ader

Broken Fall [Organic] Amsterdamse Bos, Holland (1971)

Still from 16mm film. 1' 45"

Image source: *Like You.com: Guides to Contemporary Art Culture*.

http://www.likeyou.com/archives/bas_jan_ader_gtschulte_03.htm. June 10, 2005.

Figure 11: Page 36.

Yves Klein

Leap into the void (1960)

B/W photograph. 25.9 x 20 cm

Image Source: Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York) website.

www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/bola/hob_1992.5112.htm June 7, 2005.

Figure 12: Page 37.

Bas Jan Ader

Documentation from *In Search of the Miraculous (Part II)* (1975)

Colour slide.

Image Source: Spence, Brad, *Bas Jan Ader*, Irvine: Fine Arts Gallery, University of California, 1999, p. 7.

Figure 13: Page 39.

Gillian Wearing

Images from *Signs that say what you want them to say and not signs that say what someone else wants you to say*, (1992 - 93)

Chromogenic development prints mounted on aluminium, each 41.9 x 30.5 cm.

Image Source: *Gillian Wearing: Mass Observation*, exhibition catalogue, Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2002, p. 29.

Figure 14: Page 40.

Gillian Wearing

Stills from *Confess all on video. Don't worry you will be in disguise. Interested? Call Gillian*, (1994) Colour video with sound. 30 minutes.

Image Source: *Gillian Wearing: Mass Observation*, exhibition catalogue, Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2002, p. 30-31.

Figure 15: Page 40.

Gillian Wearing

Detail from *My Favourite Track*, (1994)

Five-monitor colour video installation with sound. 90 minutes.

Image Source: *Gillian Wearing: Mass Observation*, exhibition catalogue, Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2002, p. 35.

Figure 16: Page 41.

Gillian Wearing

Still from *Dancing in Peckham*, (1994) Colour video. 25 minutes.

Image Source: *Gillian Wearing: Mass Observation*, exhibition catalogue, Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2002, p.13.

Figure 17: Page 42.

Gillian Wearing

Stills from *Trauma*, (2000)

Rear-projected colour video with sound. 30 minutes.

Image Source: *Gillian Wearing: Mass Observation*, exhibition catalogue, Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2002, p. 93.

Figure 18: Page 43.

Gillian Wearing

Self Portrait, (2000)

Chromogenic development print. 172.7 x 172.7 cm.

Image Source: *Gillian Wearing: Mass Observation*, exhibition catalogue, Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2002, p. 87.

Figure 19: Page 44.

Erwin Wurm

One Minute Sculpture (1998)

Installation view, Museum Moderner Kunst Frankfurt.

Mixed Media, realised by the public. Dimensions Variable.

Image source: Golonu, Berin (ed), *Erwin Wurm. I love my time I don't like my time*,
San Francisco: Yerba Buena Center for the Arts; Ostfildern-Ruit : Hatje Cantz Verlag,
2004, p. 114.

Figure 20: Page 45.

Erwin Wurm

American/Spanish Table of Conspiracy (2003)

Installation view and detail.

Table and instruction drawing, realised by the public. Dimensions Variable.

Image source: Golonu, Berin (ed), *Erwin Wurm. I love my time I don't like my time*,
San Francisco: Yerba Buena Center for the Arts; Ostfildern-Ruit : Hatje Cantz Verlag,
2004, p. 113.

Figure 21: Page 45.

Erwin Wurm

The Bank Manger in Front of His Bank (1999)

From the *Outdoor Sculptures Cahors* series

C-print 186 x 126.5 cm.

Image source: Golonu, Berin (ed), *Erwin Wurm. I love my time I don't like my time*,
San Francisco: Yerba Buena Center for the Arts; Ostfildern-Ruit : Hatje Cantz Verlag,
2004, p. 235.

Figure 22: Page 45.

Erwin Wurm

The Police Officer's Family Wearing His Jumper (1999)

From the *Outdoor Sculptures Cahors* series

C-print 186 x 126.5 cm.

Image source: Golonu, Berin (ed), *Erwin Wurm. I love my time I don't like my time*,
San Francisco: Yerba Buena Center for the Arts; Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Verlag,
2004, p. 235.

Figure 23: Page 46.

Erwin Wurm

Sister Ruth 1 (2001)

From the *Brothers and Sisters* series

C-print 65 x 80 cm.

Image source: Golonu, Berin (ed), *Erwin Wurm. I love my time I don't like my time*,
San Francisco: Yerba Buena Center for the Arts; Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Verlag,
2004, p. 325.

Figure 24: Page 46.

Erwin Wurm

Sister Ruth 2 (2001)

From the *Brothers and Sisters* series

C-print 65 x 80 cm.

Image source: Golonu, Berin (ed), *Erwin Wurm. I love my time I don't like my time*,
San Francisco: Yerba Buena Center for the Arts; Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Verlag,
2004, p. 324.

Figure 25: Page 48.

Still from *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1979)

Directed by Peter Weir. (McElroy and McElroy Productions)

Sourced from *ChiaroSuoro, an evolving tribute to films, directors and cinematographers*. <http://www.celtoslavavica.de/chiaroscuro/films/picnic/picnic/html>.
June 10, 2005

Figure 26: Page 49.

Thomas Struth

Still from *Video Portraits – One Hour* (1996 – 2003)

Sourced from Creativetime.org, <http://www.creativetime.org/59/struth.htm>. June 10, 2005

Figure 27: Page 52.

Singing a sad song into the wind at the edge of the world (2002)

Stills from single channel video. 2' 51"

Figure 28: Page 54.

Paranoid (2002)

Stills from single channel video. 3' 27"

Figure 29: Page 55.

Mundy Park (2000 - 03)

Installation view. Dual channel video on monitors. Dimensions variable.

Artist's own image.

Figure 30: Page 57.

Stills from video documentation of *POP* (2003). Devised and Directed by Matt Warren and Sally Rees. Performers: Patrick Barker, Damian Byrne, Pip Hunn, Jon Lenthall and Cameron Marchall. Produced by IHOS Experimental Music Theatre Laboratory, November 2003, Peacock Theatre, Hobart.

Figure 31: Page 58.

TIT (2003)

Installation view.

Video projection on Perspex screen. 80 x 80 cm.

Artists own image.

Figure 32: Page 60.

Intermission (2003)

Installation view, CAST Gallery, Hobart

Dual projection on Perspex screen. Dimensions variable. 23' 7"

Artists own image.

Figure 33:Page 62.

Stills from source video for

Cartography of the Headbang: Sally and Susie (2004)

Figure 34: Page 63.

Cartography of the Headbang: Sally and Susie (2004)

Charcoal transcribed frames of video on wall, Dimensions variable.

Artist's own image.

Figure 35: Page 65.

The Groove (2003)

Stills from single channel video. 4' 4"

Figure 36: Page 68.

Mustang Sally (2004)

Stills from single channel video for projection. 9'

Figure 37: Page 72.

Encore (2005)

Still from single channel video. 3' 16"

Figure 38: Page 75.

The Last Farewell (2005)

Stills from single channel widescreen video for projection. 4' 52"

Choir: Julian Barraclough, Joseph Barrows, Lucy Bleach, Jane Busby, Brian Coates, Monica Coates, Jack Daniels, Amanda Davies, Susie Findlay, Joybelle Frasson, Neil Haddon, Andrew Harper, Bill Hart, Derek Hart, Morgan Hart, Maria Kunda, Colin Langridge, Fiona Lee, John Lendis, Celia Lendis, Dale Lewis, Verena Oeltjen, Rod Payne, Suan Payne, Daniel Petrov, Emidio Puglielli, Lucienne Rickard, Caz Rodwell, Neil Rowe, Richard Skinner, Mary Scott, Tristan Stowards, Bec Tudor, Lucia Usmiani, Chris Usmiani, Annabel Watkins, Billie Watkins, June Watkins, Philip Watkins, Dean Vaughn Williams and Alan Young.

Appendix 6: DVD Content List

DVD One: Preliminary works

Two monitors demonstrate how Britney Spears is both catalyst for finding the inner child and portal to carnal self-gratification (2001).

Documentation of installation.

Dual channel video on monitors. Dimensions variable. 2' 02"

Spots before my eyes (and a sound of distant crying) (2001).

Video for projection. 8' 55"

With apologies (2001).

Single channel video for monitor. 2' 39"

Images from and documentation of *A Loft* (2002)

Mixed media installation. 1' 05"

DVD Two: Studio Research material

Singing a sad song into the wind at the edge of the world (2002)

Single channel video. 3'

Documentation of and source video for *Mundy Park* (2000 – 02)

Dual channel video on monitors. Dimensions Variable. 1' 7"

Paranoid 2002

Single channel video. 3' 22".

Documentation of *POP* (2003)

Performance work. Devised and Directed by Matt Warren and Sally Rees.

Performers: Patrick Barker, Damian Byrne, Pip Hunn, Jon Lenthall and Cameron Marchall.

Produced by IHOS Experimental Music Theatre Laboratory. Peacock Theatre, Hobart,
November 2003. 21' 48"

Documentation of *TIT* (2003)

Video projection on Perspex screen. 80 x 80 cm. 59"

Source video and documentation of *Intermission* 2003

Dual projection on Perspex screen. 200 x 200 cm. 3' 45"

Source video and documentation of

Cartography of the Headbang: Sally and Susie (2004)

Video frames transcribed in charcoal on wall. Dimensions variable. 1' 14"

DVD Three : Thesis Exhibition works

The Groove (2003)

Single channel video. 4' 4".

Mustang Sally (2004)

Single channel video for projection. 9'

Encore (2004/05)

Single channel video. 3' 16".

The Last Farewell (2005)

Single channel widescreen video for projection. 4' 52".

Choir: Julian Barraclough, Joseph Barrows, Lucy Bleach, Jane Busby, Brian Coates, Monica Coates, Jack Daniels, Amanda Davies, Susie Findlay, Joybelle Frasson, Neil Haddon, Andrew Harper, Bill Hart, Derek Hart, Morgan Hart, Maria Kunda, Colin Langridge, Fiona Lee, John Lendis, Celia Lendis, Dale Lewis, Verena Oeltjen, Rod Payne, Suan Payne, Daniel Petrov, Emidio Puglielli, Lucienne Rickard, Caz Rodwell, Neil Rowe, Richard Skinner, Mary Scott, Tristan Stowards, Bec Tudor, Lucia Usmiani, Chris Usmiani, Annabel Watkins, Billie Watkins, June Watkins, Philip Watkins, Dean Vaughn Williams and Alan Young.

Appendix 7: Curriculum Vitae

Sally Rees

Personal

Born 1970, Burnie, Tasmania

Education

1996 BFA Hons, University of Tasmania

Solo Exhibitions

- 2001 *A Loft*, LSSp, Letitia Street Studios, Hobart, Tasmania.
- 1999 *The Vanity Game*, FOYeR Installation Venue. Hobart Tasmania.
- 1998 *Safely in the Home*, Gallery Duncce, Hobart, Tasmania.
- 1997 *Gifts and Prizes*, Banana Moon Gallery, Salamanca Place, Hobart, Tasmania.

Collaborations

- 2005 *Nocturnal*, ReesVellaWarren, Kelly's Garden, Hobart, Tasmania
- 2002 *POP*, devised and directed by Sally Rees and Matt Warren.
Performance work for IHOS experimental music theatre workshop
- 1999 *To Eat Flowers And Walk On Glass*, Sean Bacon, Hedi Haryanto, Sally Rees and Salamanca Theatre Company. CAST gallery, Hobart, Tasmania.
Still Life, Sean Bacon, Sally Rees, Matt Warren, Oatlands District School and Salamanca Theatre Company. Oatlands, Tasmania
- 1998 *Two Tin Cans & A Piece Of String*, Empire Studios.
FOYeR Installation Venue. Hobart, Tasmania
- 1997 *Empire State* touring multimedia public art project by Empire Studios.
Various Locations, Tasmania.
- 1993 *Incorporeal 3; The Insect Cage*, collaborative mixed media exhibition with Edward Colless, David McDowell, Kevin Henderson and Matt Warren,
K.A.O.S. Café, Elizabeth St, Hobart, Tasmania

Group Exhibitions/Screenings

- 2004 *(In)Stalls*. Long Gallery, Hobart, Tasmania
- 2003 *SCAPE*, curated by Celia Lendis, CAST Gallery, Hobart, Tasmanian
Bodybag: Somewhere over the rainbow. An exhibition of artworks by the artists working in the Hobart Letitia Street Studio, curated by Malcom Bywaters, Acadamy Gallery, Inveresk, Tasmania.
Intravenous II, with Shelley Chick, Kathryn Faludi-Ball & Anna Phillips. Carnegie Gallery, Hobart.
- 2002 *Vault*, Lux Cinema, Hobart, Tasmania.
- 2001 *Arcade*, Curated by Johnathan Middleton Western Front Gallery, Vancouver, BC, Canada.
- 2000 *Hill Film Festival*, 56 West 41st Ave, Vancouver, BC, Canada
Beyond Dogma super-8 festival, Blinding Light Cinema, Vancouver, BC, Canada
- 1999 *Sculpture by the Sea*, Roaring Beach, Tasman Peninsula, Tasmania
Hutchins Art Prize for works on paper, Hutchins School, Hobart, Tasmania.
Intersection, Melbourne Fringe Festival, data projected group show, cnr Punt Rd and Swan St, Richmond, Victoria.
Winner of 1999 Fringe Festival Visual Arts Award.
- 1998 *Loop Deluxe*, curated by Matt Warren & Felix Ratcliff. Group installation of super-8 film loops FOYeR, Hobart, Tasmania.
- 1997 *Empire-public art project*, Empire Studios project exhibition of video and digitally based work, various locations, Hobart CBD, Tasmania.
- 1996 *Blue, Baby, Blue*, exhibition of sculpture and drawings + soundtrack with Matt Warren. Couch Culture Art Space, Elizabeth St, Hobart, Tasmania.

Grants and Residencies

- 2004 Australia Council VACB New Work (Emerging) Grant
University of Tasmania's Rosamund McCulloch Studio Residency,
Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris, France.
- 2001 Artist in residence, The Western Front, Vancouver, Canada
- 1998 CAST Touring Exhibition Development Fund received for
development of curatorial project for 1999
- 1997 Arts Tasmania Start-up Grant for development of solo show for 1998

Bibliography

- 2005 Puglielli E. 'Video National//Tasmania - Sally Rees' *Photofile* issue #74
– *Video-Don't Flick the Switch*, Winter 2005 p. 37
- 2002 Klaosen D. 'Hobart's L-shaped room' *Realtime* #49 June/July issue
2002. Article on the activities at Letitia Street Studios and LSSp.
Bligh D. 'Sally Rees: A Loft' *Artlink Contemporary Art Quarterly*
Volume 22 No. 1 March 2002 p. 89
Wise K. 'Carnophilia', *Artlink Contemporary Art Quarterly Volume 22*
No. 1 March 2002. Article about human/animal hybridity in
contemporary practice p. 52
- 1995 Calahan A. 'Actions louder than words' *Artlink* vol 15, #4,
December 1995 Review of *Beep n' Click*.
- 1994 Pritchard D. 'KAOS Rules!' *Realtime*, December/January issue,
1994/95 article about K.A.O.S. Café, food and activities, including
Incorporeal 3; The Insect Cage,

Other Affiliations and Professional Practice

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| 2002 – 2003 | Video technician for artist, John Vella |
| 2001 - present | Administration Officer, Contemporary Art Services Tasmania (CAST), Hobart |
| 2002 –03 | Tutor in Emedia, University of Tasmania, Centre for the Arts, Hobart. |
| 2001- 04 | Resident of Letitia Street Studios, Hobart, Tasmania. |
| 2000 | Studio/Research assistant to performance artist, Judy Radul, Vancouver, BC, Canada. |
| | Instructor, <i>Backstage 2000</i> for Theatre BC. |
| | Workshop - <i>Multimedia and the Stage</i> , Vancouver, BC, Canada. |
| 1999 | Attended <i>Mediate</i> ANAT (Australian Network for Art & Technology) summer school for curators of multi-media. |
| | Assistant Artistic Director, <i>The Divine Kiss</i> , IHOS opera, Hobart, Tasmania. |
| | Co-Art Director, <i>Rapture</i> , IHOS Opera, Hobart, Tasmania. |
| | Curator of <i>Effect</i> , exhibition exploring Tasmanian emerging artists response to electronic media. Produced under the CAST Emerging Curator program. CAST Gallery, Hobart and University Gallery, Launceston, Tasmania. |
| 1996-99 | Empire Studios, Multimedia Collective. Hobart, Tasmania |
| 1996-97 | Board member Gallery Dunce. Artist Run Initiative, Hobart, Tasmania. |
| 1995-96 | Board member, Couch Culture Artspace, Artist Run Initiative. Hobart, Tasmania |

